

family@church

making family worship easier

Service Plans

YEAR TWO

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December – A Christingle Service

What you'll need for this service:

- Christingles (oranges, candles, ribbon, sweets, cocktail sticks)
- A pop up tent (or canopy representing a tent), a bar of soap, a map, candle, a photo of family and something to make people laugh (a joke, a funny item or prop).
- Crib scene (without Magi) (Prayers)

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Make up the cocktail sticks with sweets for the Christingles and place on four different trays labelled: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter

God's Family Gathers

*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to.
Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Jesus Christ is the light of the world; Jesus is our Way.
With Jesus even dark places are light; Jesus is the Truth.
In Jesus we shall live for ever; Jesus is our Life

God is with us now. In his love...
We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ May the God of light, who sent Jesus to Light up the way, shine upon you, forgive you your sins and keep you in life eternal. Amen.

SONG

God's Family Listens

Reading: John 1:1-14

Talk

Who has ever been camping? Camping this year? Maybe camping in a tent? A caravan? *ASK PEOPLE* – where have you been? What do you like doing when you go camping? Cycling? Walking? Sight seeing.

Put up a pop up tent.

What things do we need to take camping?

Soap – to make us clean.

Map – to show us the way.

Candle – to give us light.

A photo of our parents or those we love – to show us where we came from, and to remind us who is going to doing the washing when we get home again!

And a run along nun (or something funny!) – because no camping trip is complete without!

Did you know that Jesus went camping? When Jesus was born, it was like God was pitching his tent, or parking his caravan here on Earth.

God came camping so that he might be with us here. So why do I take all these things camping?

Soap – because God going camping means that we all can be clean after getting a bit mucky, after getting things wrong, after we sin.

The map – because Jesus said he knows the way, “follow me.”

The candle – because Jesus said I am the light of the world.

The photo of parents – because Jesus shows us what God is like.

And the run along nun? Because Jesus wanted us to have fun along the way! And he said live life to the full.

Christmas is a great way of having fun remembering God's great camping trip to Earth, born as a tiny baby in Bethlehem, and that's worth celebrating!

The Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us, moving into the neighbourhood. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (The Message)

The one who made the starry skies, is now lying in a manger looking up to the skies. The one who knows everything, now relies on Mary to help his growth and learning. The one who had a home in heaven, now has a home in a lowly stable. Jesus the joy of heaven was born in a world of danger, so that we might become children of God.

Next time you go camping, remember God's great camping trip – Jesus in the manger.

SONG

God's Family Prays

The Christingles – we are going on a camping trip now, as we journey through the year: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. In the four corners of the church you will find treats – four sticks to crown your Christingles. Take one stick from each corner. As you take a stick from each corner, I wonder if you can look back at the past year – the highlights and achievements of your year.

When you've travelled to the four corners of the church and reflected on the year that was gone by, come to the centre of the church to have your Christingle lit.

Let people move, play relaxing music.

Gather children (with adults!) to the centre of the church, sitting around you. If you can erect a large canopy to symbolise a tent, do so.

When we look back at the year that we've had, we can be joyful that God was there with us. This candle tells us that Jesus is always with us – his light never ever goes out!

Bless Crib, lights out...

SONG

Prayers (short) of Intercession

The Lord's Prayer

All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...

Church Family Notices can be shared here.

Blessing:

*May the joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ child
be yours this Christmas;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.*

SONG

Song suggestions:

Longing for light (Farrell)
Once in Royal David's city (trad)
You are the King of glory (DuMosch)
This little light of mine (Spiritual)
Silent night (trad)
Hark! the herald angels sing (trad)
Away in a manger (trad)
The Christingle Song (See Children's Society website)
Can you see what we have made? (Kendrick)
Light of the world (Hughes)

Notes

January – Epiphany: direction for the Church

What you'll need for this service:

- Items to represent gold, frankincense and myrrh.
- Small craft gift boxes (one per person) (See USB for template)
- Small scrolls with printed scripture verses on them.
- Small chocolate coins, small sweets or a small gift.
- Ribbon

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Put the rolled up scripture verses in the boxes, alongside a chocolate coin or another gift and tie with ribbon.

God's Family Gathers

Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to.
Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays.
Introduce the theme and lead into...

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ *May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

SONG

God's Family Listens

Readings: Isaiah 9:6-7 and Matthew 2:1-12

Talk

What gifts did you get at Christmas? *Ask the congregation.*

What gifts did the Wise Men bring to Jesus? *Ask the congregation.*

Gold – for a King (show something gold). Expensive and precious – Joseph and Mary probably used the gold to escape to Egypt.

Frankincense – to symbolise that Jesus would offer himself to the world (burn some or show some)

Myrrh – a spice used to anoint bodies, symbolising the death that Jesus would face. Myrrh was also mixed with wine as a drink – Jesus was probably given it to drink whilst he was on the cross.

What would you give Jesus if you were one of the Magi? Here is a small gift box for each of you. **Give out gift boxes.** In them, if you unwrap them, is a small gift from God to you. It may not seem much, but it

means everything to God, because you mean everything to him. I wonder if you might take the box home, fill it with a gift and give it to someone during the week – someone who needs a gift, who needs uplifting. Leave the small scripture verse in the box too!

After the magi left Jesus, we don't hear of them again! Yet, their gifts were so important to the meaning of this child's birth. God has given us the greatest gift of all, and so we should give that gift to others too.

The Church is one of God's gifts to us. The Church is a worldwide family. It is a gathering of people who love God, because he loved us so much he gave his Son, Jesus. You have been given gifts today and you will give gifts in that small box during the week. However, you've also been given gifts to use in God's Church – some musical or in reading, in welcoming or praying with someone. Whatever you feel your gift is, the church is the place to see it used. Our gifts are inspired by the greatest gift of all - Jesus. The Church is continued by people coming forward with their God-given gifts. Maybe you can start to use yours today? When we do use our gifts, and when we use those gifts for others, the Church shines in the world, like those gifts the magi gave to Jesus, and like the gift God gave to the world.

SONG

God's Family Prays

Prayers, short and punchy, to include:

- *Thanksgiving for God's great gift to us*
- *Help and courage to give a gift to someone else*
- *Strength to be a gift to the world*
- *Thanks that Jesus guides and loves us, his church family*

End with the Epiphany Collect

Creator of the heavens,
who led the Magi by a star to worship the Christ-child:
guide and sustain us, that we may find our journey's end
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

God's Family Goes!

If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Church Family Notices can be given here.

Blessing:

+ May God the Father, who led the wise men by the shining of a star to find the Christ, the Light from Light, lead you also in your pilgrimage to find the Lord. And the blessing of God Almighty...

SONG

Song suggestions:

We three Kings (trad)

Angels from the realms of glory (trad)

See him lying on a bed of straw (trad)

Joy has dawned upon the earth (Getty/Townend)

Joy to the world (trad)

The most beautiful night of the year

Notes

February – Candlemas: light to the Church

What you'll need for this service:

- T-light candles
- Two jars with lids, one with water in. (Talk)
- Lamp with a bulb, torch, LED lights, small fire (or something to represent), candle, the sun (or something to represent). (Prayers)

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Print the prayers for each station on small cards for people to take away.

God's Family Gathers

Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme and lead into...

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG

God's Family Listens

Readings: Matthew 5:13-16

Talk

Last month we were given gift boxes. Who used their gift box to give a gift to someone else? If you used yours to give someone a gift, then you might say you have been 'light' to that person.

In today's reading Jesus told those who were listening to him about sharing their light; that when we do shine our light, people will see and know that God is at work in them.

If I light a small candle (*light a candle*) and put it in a glass full of water look what happens. It goes out! If I light another candle (*light a candle*) and put it in a glass and do the lid up, look what happens. It goes out. The first candle is put out by water and the second is put out because it has run out of the air it needs to keep going.

In some ways the Church is a place we can go to keep our light shining bright. At Church we meet with others who love God and explore ways to love each other too. At Church we worship together, even though we can worship God at home too, and at Church we are refuelled and kept going.

Jesus said not to be like the light that goes out under the basket, or in water and in the jar in our case. Jesus said shine bright so that people will see you and love him.

Rihanna had a great song recently called 'Shine bright like a diamond.' Really, she is saying what Jesus said all those years ago – shine, so that others may see God.

Think of the times you shine bright – maybe it's when you gave someone that gift in a box last month. Think of those times you need to shine brighter for God.

Maybe you're worried about dark things in your life at the moment or maybe you're a bit unhappy or unfulfilled? Maybe you're running low and need refreshing? Maybe you're plodding along fine but forget to pray to God? Well the Church is here. We are a family of people from different backgrounds and skills and we all want to help each other shine bright for Jesus.

SONG

God's Family Prays

Around the church are different stations each with different ways of shining light. Candles, torches, fires and so on.

Move in groups to go to each station. At each station there will be some objects to look at and someone will say a prayer with each group. When you've done with that prayer, take a prayer card and move on to the next station. When you've been round them all, please take your seat.

Gentle music is played relating to light. Use these prayers for something similar:

Station 1 – lamp and bulb

Prayer: Father God, as this lamp shines so brightly, help us to shine too. Help us not to burn out, but to keep plugged in to you. We pray for those who are burnt out at this time. Amen.

Station 2 – torch

Prayer: Father God, as this torch helps us to see the way in the darkness, help us to fix our eyes on you always. We pray for those who are stuck in dark places and need the light of your love. Amen.

Station 3 – something with LED lights

Prayer: Father God, your love shines brighter than the brightest of all LED bulbs! Help us to share your love with those who have run out of energy or live in the shadows. Amen.

Station 4 – small fire

Prayer: Father God, your love burns like the flames of this fire. Send your Holy Spirit to burn within our lives. We pray for those who have been hurt by fire or who use the flames of fire to stay warm. Amen.

Station 5 – candle

Prayer: Father God, one small candle to light up a huge room. Send a tiny spark in our lives now. Help us to be a tiny flame to others, so that they might love you too. Amen.

Station 6 – sun

Prayer: Father God, you give the light of the Sun to keep our world alive. We thank you that your love burns brighter than the Sun. We pray for those who don't get to enjoy the sun and for those who never get to feel its warmth.

End with the Candlemas collect

Lord Jesus Christ, light of the nations and glory of Israel:
make your home among us, and present us pure and holy
to your heavenly Father; your God and our God. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

God's Family Goes!

If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Church Family Notices can be shared here.

Blessing:

*+ May Christ, whose light fills the skies,
fill you with his light, gladden and warm your heart,
and guide your feet into the ways of peace;
and the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.*

SONG

Song Suggestions:

Colours of day dawn
Shine, Jesus, shine!
Longing for light
Be thou my vision
The Spirit lives (Walk in the light)
Shine a candle
Like a candle flame

Notes

March – Lent: God’s Vision for the Church

What you’ll need for this service:

- A selection of different prayers that people can take away with them. (Prayers)
- Cards with scripture verses on, or have some copies of a daily reading guide. (Prayers)
- A selection of things that people can give up during Lent. (Prayers)
- A selection of posters and leaflets for different charities that your churches/diocese supports. (Prayers)

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Set up Lent stations around the church

God’s Family Gathers

Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme and lead into...

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG

God’s Family Listens

Readings: Joel 2:12-14 and Mark 1:12-15

Talk

Lent is about focusing on God. During Lent the Church thinks about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus alongside the pattern of our own lives. It’s a time for us to get closer to God and know his love even more in our lives – maybe by giving something up or by reading the Bible more. It might mean using our money in better ways or by fasting from food for several days.

Lent was once used as a time of preparation by those who were to be baptised and confirmed at Easter. During Lent they prepared their lives to make room for Jesus and to follow him better.

How long does Lent last? *Ask congregation.* 40 days.

In the bible, this great big book, whenever God wants to give his people something really special to help them love him he asks that they prepare themselves to make room for that something special.

Moses fasted for forty days before God gave him... what? Ask. The Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Jesus fasted for forty days before he began his ministry. We keep forty days of Lent to then celebrate that Jesus is risen from the dead! Alleluia!

Today, I still think God asks us to prepare before he gives us something special. That's why the Christians still celebrate Lent. But I wonder what we might need to do to prepare?

Praying – as often as we can

Reading – reading the bible as much as we can

Fasting – giving up things to make room for God

Giving – to share with others the things we have and to give them the things they don't have.

Are we becoming the sort of person that God wants us to be? Are we listening to God by reading the Bible and taking time to pray. This season of Lent, I hope we can do it as a church. If we do we might find that at the end of Lent God has something extraordinary to share with us – more of his love and his friendship.

If you travel around the church now, you'll find four different stations that might help us all make room for God this Lent.

Station 1 – Praying. Have a selection of different prayers that people can take away with them. For children, provide some simple prayers and encourage what we might do when we pray. For example, close our eyes, put our hands together, think about Jesus.

Station 2 – Reading. Find some cards with scripture verses on, or have some copies of a daily reading guide. You might want to take people's mobile numbers to text them a daily verse, or set up a social media page where you can post scripture readings. For children, have a short memory verse to colour in.

Station 3 – Fasting. Have a selection of things that people can give up during Lent. As well as chocolate, have unusual ideas. For children, allow them to taste and see some things we might give up – chocolate tasting works a treat!

Station 4 – Giving. Have a selection of posters and leaflets for different charities that your churches/diocese supports. Encourage people to take them to read. Giving may include things other than money though. For children, encourage what might be done with pocket money or give each child a pound coin to give to a charity of their choice.

When people have finished going round the stations, announce the next song.

SONG

God's Family Prays

Prayers may include:

Lord God, we thank you for this season of Lent, in which we have a chance to draw closer to you. Help us to listen to you as we sacrifice and give things up.

We pray for your Church, your family, here on earth. We pray for our bishops, clergy and all who lead the Church. We pray for this church and for all who come here to find your love. We thank you for Lent and for the Church's witness to you in this season as we prepare for Easter.

We pray for those who find Lent difficult for various reasons. Lord, in Lent we remember you suffering and dying upon the cross. So Lord, be alongside those who are suffering or in need at this time.

We pray for ourselves, Lord, that you may strengthen us to see Lent through to the end. Help us to grow closer to you, to be found in your word more and to be more generous with our time and in our giving.

End with the Lent collect

Almighty God, by the prayer and discipline of Lent
may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings,
and by following in his way come to share in his glory
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

If you have time, you could get the congregation to write the thing they are giving up for Lent or the thing they need to offer to God for help. Write it on a piece of paper and pin it to a large cross. You can give people the chance to review these next month!

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

God's Family Goes!

If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Church Family Notices can be shared here.

Blessing:

+ *May Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,
to deny yourselves, take up your cross and follow him;
and the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.*

SONG

Song Suggestions:

I am a new creation
Take my life and let it be
In Christ alone
When I survey
Blessed be your name (Redman)
El Shaddai (Grant)

Other Lent activities that can be used in this service:

- Encourage families to make promises to keep their chosen Lent observance. Provide a list of things families might do over Lent. Give lots of praise next month for those who have kept their promises, and encourage those who haven't been able to.
- Use ash to illustrate the message of Lent. Contrast ash with the blessing of water and oil.
- Use some of the Stations of the Cross to illustrate why giving things up is so important to Christians.
- Pair up members of the congregation with a family to share in their Lenten disciplines together.
- Some charities and groups produce a Lent calendar with daily readings, tasks and thoughts. Why not share these with your congregation.
- Have some crosses to colour in the pews. Display them at your Easter service next month.

Notes

April – Easter: Jesus, joy to the Church

What you'll need for this service:

- Before the service create a short video by interviewing people in your community and in your church asking 'What does Easter mean to you?' Explain that it will be shown in church on Easter Day – maybe they'll come along! It only needs to be a few minutes long.
- If you haven't already, you'll need a laptop/projector and speakers to show the video! Get someone who is good with technology involved to use their gifts but also so it runs smoothly!
- A plain white chasuble (get a member of the congregation to rustle something up using the template of a current chasuble.) You may be able to purchase these cheap online. Failing this, prepare a plain cloth to fit your altar/communion table.
- Fabric paints (friendly to skin). Alternatively use poster paints.
- Newspaper or floor covering
- Water and paper towels
- Chunks of Fairtrade Chilli chocolate (plain for those who wish) (Talk 1)

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Prepare the plain chasuble on the floor with a selection of coloured paints around it.
- Set up audio and sound equipment.
- There are a few videos you may want to watch/download for the service. The links are displayed in Talk 1 and Talk 2.

God's Family Gathers

*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to.
Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

*Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays.
Introduce the theme and lead into...*

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG

Readings: I Corinthians 15:3-8 and John 20:1-9

Talk I

What does Easter mean to you? *Show the home made Easter video.*

Easter means so much to so many. Jesus suffered a great deal on the cross. All that was bad about being a human was put on his shoulders and he died. We know though, that on Easter morning those who went to look after Jesus' dead body found that his body was gone. Jesus wasn't dead anymore, but alive again!

For Jesus, Easter Day was about power and love. He had power over all those bad things that separate us from God's perfect love. Easter Day might be described as eating a chocolate chilli sweet. You get that hot taste of chilli, which can even burn, but it is overwhelmed by the sweet taste of chocolate – well, it depends who is making the sweets!

Easter Day reminds us that in the end, love always wins. That may not be a brilliant answer for what we have to live through sometimes, but Jesus has promised that he will save us from all that harms us and from all that wants to separate us from God's love and from loving each other. You may taste the hot chilli flavour, but in the end the taste of chocolate remains.

Without Easter Day, Jesus mission would be a disaster and we would not be gathered here today, celebrating God's love for us. To celebrate, the Church is decorated with beautiful flowers and the altar cloth transformed into White/Gold. We are going to create our own decorations for the Church, by creating a chasuble and/or an altar cloth.

A chasuble is worn by the priest at Holy Communion, one of the most important times for the church. It is a symbol that we have all come together to remember Jesus and to celebrate his love.

In a moment some music will play and I'd like us to travel round the chasuble and print one of our hands on the material. Someone will be there to help you. When you have printed your hand, please return to your seat where some chilli chocolate (*or plain chocolate*) will be brought round! The chasuble will be a reminder every time the priest wears it that we celebrate God's Easter love, as a community and as a family.

People move to your station (set up two if you need two chasubles, or create a matching altar cloth too). As this happens you can make use of the projector and play a few music videos such as:

Easter song - Remember Me - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhFBX5ZSySo>

There can be Miracles - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gur8ccqrQ9c> (From the Prince of Egypt film)

Someone to take round chilli chocolate as people print their hands.

The finished chasuble will need to dry, but will be covered in hand prints from your congregation. Use the chasuble when you can as a powerful symbol of the church's love for God and of God's love for them. You can always add new handprints throughout the year if any new comers appear!

OR

Talk 2

Open by watching your homemade Easter video.

Easter means so much to so many people. Those who were with Jesus as he was crucified must have given up all hope in God. It seems he had let them down. The angry mob that came and took him away were the people that welcomed him into Jerusalem. Jesus' close friend denied even knowing him. On the cross, people shouted insults at him.

Let's hear the whole story. Watch the Youtube video 'Follow Jesus on Twitter'.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-hW680pCLs>

I wonder how we might follow Jesus and love him more today because of all he has done for us. One way we might is to rededicate ourselves to Jesus and to each other. We're going to do that now as we print our hand on a chasuble and altar cloth. See *instructions in Talk 1*.

SONG

God's Family Prays

Jesus, joy of the church, fill us, your family, with the love and light of your resurrection. We pray for your people throughout the world, especially those who live under oppression or with the threat of war or violence. We pray especially for N and N. Help all the nations of this world to build communities of peace and stability in which humanity is valued and creation is cared for.

Jesus, joy of the church, fill us, your family, with the power and glory of your resurrection. We pray for our church, for our bishops N and N, our clergy, lay readers, churchwardens and all who support and sustain our church family life. Help us to be joyful in the wonderful message we proclaim – that Jesus is alive – and help us to be found in his new life.

Jesus, joy of the church, fill us, your family, with the peace and hope of your resurrection. We pray for those who are sick or ill at this time, for N and N, and for those who have died, for N and N. By dying you have destroyed death and by rising from the dead you have restored our lives. Bring all those we love and care for into your loving arms, where death is no more and where the streets are filled with victory.

End with the Easter collect

God of glory, by the raising of your Son you have broken the chains of death and hell: fill your Church with faith and hope; for a new day has dawned and the way to life stands open in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

God's Family Goes!

If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Church Family Notices can be shared here.

Blessing:

+ God, who through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ has given us the victory, give you joy and peace in your faith; and the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.

SONG**Song Suggestions:**

Christ the Lord is risen today (trad)
See, what a morning (Townend/Getty)
Meekness and Majesty (Kendrick)
Christ Triumphant ever reigning (trad)
Thank you for the cross, Lord (Hillsong)
At the name of Jesus (trad)

Any other Easter hymns/songs

Notes

May – Pentecost: Spirit, life to the Church

What you'll need for this service:

- Template to make a Pentecost flame hat (see USB stick)
- The flags of various countries (See Prayers)
- Envelopes with Acts 2:1 in six languages (see end)

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Give out scissors, card and pens, or put them in pews. As people gather, encourage them to start make Pentecost hats. Have some already made at the back of the church.
- Prepare envelopes with six different languages in them (Talk)

God's Family Gathers

Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme and lead into...

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG

God's Family Listens

Readings: Genesis 11:1-9 and Acts 2:1-4

Talk

As you came in you were given an envelope. Each envelope has a verse from the bible inside. I'd like you to gather into groups of people who have the same language as you. You are only allowed to communicate with others using the language on your cards. If you have French, you're only allowed to speak French, and so on. Do not show others your card!

Move around the church, gather into groups of people with the same language as you.

At the end of the game you should have six groups of people gathered in their various languages.

Ask the congregation how hard it was to communicate with others. How did it feel when you found someone else who spoke the same language as you?

Return to seats.

Jesus had gone back to heaven and his friends were gathered together. As they were waiting together, the Holy Spirit was sent to them and they were able to speak in other languages in order to tell so many other people about Jesus.

Imagine how excited the people listening to Jesus' friends must have been when they told them about Jesus. They may have felt a bit like you when you found someone who spoke the same language as you. Not only could the people of Jerusalem now understand this good news in their own language, but they could finally believe in the living God and place their trust in him. That day, the disciples saw loads of people become Christians – people who wanted to follow God!

I wonder how you became a Christian? Did you hear something you understood and believed? Is there something you still don't understand about Jesus? At Pentecost the Spirit of God filled the hearts of so many people. Jesus' disciples probably felt alone and afraid as Jesus left to go back to heaven, but yet God filled them with this life and breath. Today, the Holy Spirit still fills us too, so that we might go out and tell others. God was doing amazing things in the lives of those who followed Jesus as they told others about him. God still does amazing things in us today too.

SONG

God's Family Prays

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit fell on his followers so that they may have power to tell the world about the love of Jesus. Let's pray for that world.

Bring forward and display flags from countries that are in the news at the moment. End with the UK. In each case, pray for the reasons why they're in the news and ask God's Spirit to fill that place/situation.

End with the Pentecost collect

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, ignite in us your holy fire; strengthen your children with the gift of faith, revive your Church with the breath of love, and renew the face of the earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

God's Family Goes!

If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Church Family Notices can be given here.

Blessing:

+ *The Spirit of truth lead you into all truth,
give you grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord
and strengthen you to proclaim the word and works of God
and the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.*

SONG

Song Suggestions:

The Spirit lives to set us free (trad)
Spirit of the living God (sung as a chorus)
Come down O love divine (trad)
He is the Lord and he reigns on high (Petra)
You laid aside your majesty (Daugherty)
Thine be the glory! (trad)

Languages for envelopes:

English:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

French:

Quand le jour de la Pentecôte , ils étaient tous ensemble dans un seul endroit. Et tout à coup il vint du ciel un bruit comme celui d'un vent violent, et il remplit toute la maison où ils étaient assis .

German:

Als der Pfingsttag gekommen war , waren sie alle an einem Ort zusammen . Und plötzlich vom Himmel kam ein Geräusch wie das Rauschen eines gewaltigen Wind und erfüllte das ganze Haus, in dem sie saßen.

Afrikaans:

Wanneer die dag van die pinksterfees aanbreek het , was hulle almal eendragtig bymekaar . En skielik uit die hemel kom daar 'n geluid soos die gedruis van 'n gewelddadige wind en die land vervul die hele huis waar hulle gesit het .

Welsh:

Pan fydd y dydd y Pentecost wedi dod , eu bod i gyd at ei gilydd mewn un lle. Ac yn sydyn o'r nef y daeth sŵn fel y rhuthr gwynt treisgar, ac fe lanwodd yr holl dŷ lle'r oeddent yn eistedd .

Portuguese

Quando o dia de Pentecostes , estavam todos reunidos no mesmo lugar . E, de repente , veio do céu um som, como de um vento impetuoso, e encheu toda a casa onde estavam sentados .

Pentecost hat:



Notes

June – Trinity: Indescribable God

What you'll need for this service:

- Long (A3) strips of card (one per person) (Talk)
- Coloured pens/pencils
- Scissors

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Cut the A3 card into long strips. Give card, pens and scissors out as people enter or place in pews.
- Make a large copy (or project) the complicated equation at the end of this plan.

God's Family Gathers

Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to.
Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays.
Introduce the theme and lead into...

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ *May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

SONG

God's Family Listens

Reading: Matthew 28:16-end

Talk

In your pews you'll find some strips of card. Take one each. Bend the card so both ends are touching and then flip one end and stick it to the other. (*see end of the service plan for a picture!*)

Möbius bands have one side and boundary. Take a pen and draw a line down the middle of the strip.

Where does it join up?

Now take the scissors and cut along the centre of the strip. You'll create one long strip with two twists in it. This happens because the original strip only has one edge that is twice as long as the original strip. Cutting creates a second independent edge, half of which was on each side of the scissors. Cutting this new, longer, strip down the middle creates two strips wound around each other, each with two full twists.

Are you confused? We have created something simple, beautiful and yet complex. When Christians talk about God, we often use the word Trinity. The Trinity describes the way that we experience to God. It describes how God can draw us into a relationship with him.

The Mobius strip is made of one piece of card. It has one boundary and one edge, if you run your finger along the edge you'll find it has no beginning or ending. It's something simple but yet complex. God can be seen as the same – something beautiful and very complex.

Enlarge or project the equation at the end of this plan.

One way to represent the Mobius strip as a subset of three-dimensional Euclidean space is using the parametrization. This equation tells us what the Mobius band is about.

Did you understand that? Probably not! I don't understand it at all. It's hard to describe something so complex! I wonder how we might describe God then, who is so much bigger than this Mobius band and more complex than the entire universe. God surpasses the laws of physics and maths.

Well it's much simpler than we think. Those who have trusted in God in the past and have seen him at work in their lives have helped us to describe him. No equations though, just simple words like... *Love, Joy, Peace, King, Almighty, Beautiful, Everywhere, Personal...*

Take your Mobius band home and as you look at it, remember that God is even more complex and indescribable. Also remember that God is even more describable, close and personal than you can even imagine. Trinity... how do you describe God?

SONG

God's Family Prays

Prayers can include the following... you may want people to reflect whilst looking at their Mobius bands. The simple chorus 'Father we adore you' sung as a three part round is a powerful image of the Trinity – three parts sung at once, yet one song.

Father of heaven... creator

Jesus, Son of Man... redeemer

Holy Spirit, breathe of life... sustainer

End with the Trinity collect

Holy God, faithful and unchanging: enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth, and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love, that we may truly worship you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

God's Family Goes!

If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Church Family Notices may be given here.

Blessing:

+ God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love,
Defend you on every side and guide you into truth and peace, and the blessing of God Almighty...
Amen.

SONG**Song Suggestions:**

All hail the power of Jesu' name (trad)
Blessed be your name (Redman)
For God so loved (Hardwick)
Immortal, invisible (trad)
The splendour of the King (Tomlin)
Indescribable (Tomlin)

Figure 1 Use this during the Talk

$$\begin{aligned}x(u, v) &= \left(1 + \frac{v}{2} \cos \frac{u}{2}\right) \cos u \\y(u, v) &= \left(1 + \frac{v}{2} \cos \frac{u}{2}\right) \sin u \\z(u, v) &= \frac{v}{2} \sin \frac{u}{2}\end{aligned}$$



Figure 2 The Möbius Band

Notes

July – Saints: Let us run the race

What you'll need for this service:

- Plastic medals or trophies, preferably one for each person present (Talk)

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.

God's Family Gathers

Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme and lead into...

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG

God's Family Listens

Readings: Hebrews 12:1-2, 12-13 and Matthew 16:13-19

Talk

You may already know the story of Derek Redmond, who in 1992 was running in the 400 metre sprint in the Olympic Games. Derek was tipped to win the race and everything hinted that he would.

150 metres into the race Derek fell to the ground as his hamstring was torn in his leg. He was in such agony. After 30 seconds or so, he got up again and limped around the track determined to finish the race set out before him – the race that he was trained and prepared for.

The reading we heard from Hebrews tells us that life is a bit like a race. The track is set out before us and all we have to do is run it. There is a goal too – which we must keep our eyes fixed on. The goal is Jesus. Of course, as on any race track, there are sometimes injuries, those who are weak, those who fall over, some who try to cheat.

Although sometimes the race seems hard and long, it's important to remember that we're not alone.. When Derek Redmond fell, he got up and continued the race. But all of a sudden, by his side, his father appeared and helped him to the finish line. In the same way, when we are running the race of life, God is there by our side too. Derek's dad said to him "we'll finish the race together". And they did!

Not only is God with us but he has given us the great heroes and Saints of our faith. These are now supporters in our race, cheering us on. So in our race of life may we have the strength to carry on when things get tough and always hear God whisper to us 'let's do this together'.

As a reminder that God is with us in our race, I'm going to invite each of you up to collect your medal. The medal is a sign and symbol that God loves you and we love you, and that when things get tough, or even when they're not tough, God is there with you and we are here for you.

Play Olympic music and invite people to receive a medal (as if receiving communion)

SONG

God's Family Prays

O God, you surround us with a great cloud of witnesses to encourage and support us through life and in our faith. Give us strength to keep running and to get rid of all those things that cling to us and try to stop us. Help us fix our eyes on the prize, Jesus, your Son.

We pray for those who cheer us on in our lives: our family, friends, teachers, work colleagues and our church family. We give thanks for the sacrifices they make to love and support us.

We pray for those who help share the burden of life's troubles: for doctors, the police and emergency services, those who listen to us and counsellors. We give thanks for those who lead and guide us: for The Queen, our Prime Minister, politicians and MPs, for our bishops N and N and for our clergy.

We pray for those who are finding the race of life difficult at this time. For N and N, and all who need our prayers at this time. We give thanks for those who have shared our life but now cheer us on in heaven.

Lord, help us to run this race and never give up.
Help us to fix our eyes on Jesus in all we do and say.

End with the Saints' Day collect

God of holiness, your glory is proclaimed in every age: as we rejoice in the faith of your saints, inspire us to follow their example with boldness and joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

God's Family Goes!

If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Church Family Notices can be given here.

Blessing:

+ May Christ who makes saints of sinners, who has transformed those who surround us today, raise and strengthen you that you may transform the world; and the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.

SONG**Song Suggestions:**

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine (trad)
You are the King of glory
Let us run with perseverance (Morris)
Amazing grace (trad)
What a friend we have in Jesus (trad)

Other activities that can be used in this service:

- The theme of 'following in the footsteps' or 'running the race' allows for the theme of feet, walking and following to be shared. Why not stretch a long piece of paper down the aisle and ask congregation members to print their feet on it. This can be done in a reflective manner as well as fun!
- If there's any racing, running or other sporting events close to the date of this service, you could refer to it.
- Decorate the church as a racing track – start at the font (where our race begins at baptism) and end at the high altar or the flowing out the door. You can have bunting or finishing flags.

Notes

What you'll need for this service:

- You may wish to give people a free copy of the bible. There are a few charities that might donate some. Alternatively, ask your congregation to donate some!

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.

God's Family Gathers

Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme and lead into...

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG

God's Family Listens

Reading: Colossians 3:12-17

Talk

You might think that the Bible is a book full of rules. Of course, it does have lots of rules for God's people to follow. However, the rules are there to bring freedom and to help us live life to the full.

The Old Testament, the first section of the Bible, talks again and again about people being set free – the poor, those who are oppressed, the deaf and those who can't walk or talk, those who feel guilty about what they've done in their lives, and from the hurt and let down that we often face in life.

The reading we heard from Colossians today lists lots of things that can set us free – we might not even realise we need to be set free from something. Maybe there's someone you don't like, or even hate. The Bible says that if we want to be free we are to try and love them – forgive as God has forgiven us. Maybe you're feeling unsettled or a bit low. The Bible passage we heard says that to be set free from those things we should sing joyful songs, letting the peace of God fill us. Maybe we get angry a lot. The Bible teaches patience.

Of course, we all get things wrong, we all will feel miserable at times, but as Christians we believe that the best remedy is found in the Bible. So, it becomes not so much a book of horrible rules to follow, but gentle advice from God to help us live our lives to the best we possibly can.

Someone once told me, a child in fact, that the Bible is like God's diary. As people have lived life and experienced different situations and problems, they have written down their prayers and the answers that God has given to help. You might say that the Bible is a love story from God to us. When we read it we find that it has a lot to tell us about our lives. Why? Because it is there to help us live the way God wants us to live, to help set us free from those things that get us down and to reassure us of God's love for each and every one of us.

SONG

God's Family Prays

Produce large cards with words from the Colossians reading:

- **Holy and Beloved**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Perfect Harmony**
- **Love in the One Body**
- **Word of Christ**

Ask members of the congregation to hold up these words at the front of Church. Write prayers for each of the cards based on the following:

- **Holy and Beloved** – thanks to God that we are holy and beloved and called by God to live his way in the world.
- **Forgiveness** – ask God to help us forgive those who sin against us, as he has forgiven us our sins.
- **Perfect Harmony** - tell God that it is hard to live in perfect harmony, but with the help of the Spirit we might dare achieve it
- **Love in the One Body** – pray for the Church, global, diocese and local needs.
- **Word of Christ** – give thanks for the Bible, the Word of God. Give thanks that God speaks in Jesus and by listening to him, we can and will be set free, able to live a life for God as his children, holy and beloved.

You may want to ask people to come forward to receive a Bible or a Bible daily reading plan here.

End with this collect

Faithful Creator, whose mercy never fails: deepen our faithfulness to you and to your living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

God's Family Goes!

If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Church Family Notices may be shared here.

Blessing:

+ The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace. And the blessing of God Almighty...

SONG

Song Suggestions:

- Lord, thy word abideth (trad)
- Spirit of holiness (trad)
- Ancient words (Smith)
- Thy word is a lamp unto our feet
- Thou whose almighty word (trad)

Notes

September – Back to School Service

What you'll need for this service:

- Small wooden crosses
- Holy Water for blessing of school bags
- Back to School Bingo cards (Talk 2) See USB stick.
- School bag with various items (Talk3)

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.

God's Family Gathers

Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme and lead into...

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG

God's Family Listens

Readings: Proverbs 3:5-6 and Luke 2:41-52 (or Philipians 4:4-9)

Talk 1

Who is going back or has already gone back to school this month? What things are you thinking about as you prepare to go back? Maybe you're at a new school? Maybe you'll have a new teacher? What will the other children be like? Will it be fun?

Going to school is a huge step for every child. Jesus would have gone to school. He went to school to learn about God. Jesus was also a great teacher, teaching his friends all they needed to know about who he was and teaching them to love God.

When you're at school you will learn so many good things and meet lots of new people. It's important to remember that not everyone feels like that. You might feel a bit scared or alone at points along the way. Maybe you can help someone who feels a bit like that?

It's easy to forget that Jesus, who went to school and was a teacher himself, promised to be with us always, even when things aren't perfect. In a moment we're going to ask God to bless your school bag or your uniforms (*there may be teachers with diaries etc too*). We ask God to bless them as a reminder that he is with us wherever we go. We carry our bags on our backs, we carry them around school and use them all the time. God wants to be with us here in church, at home or work, and even at school!

We're also going to give you a small wooden cross to carry in your bag. When you use your bag you might find it in there and remember how much God loves and cares for you. Maybe you might be having a hard day and you might find it in your bag and say a prayer. You might want to hold it as you walk to school. Whatever, when you go back to school I hope you remember that you go back to school with God!

Talk 2

Play 'Back to School' bingo. Produce bingo cards (or see below) that list a number of practical things you might take to school (pens, pencils etc), but also attitudes and attributes that might help us through school/work (love, generosity etc). Have a few prizes and play a few times – lines, full house cards etc.

End the game by summing up: We might get distracted or worried about if we have the right pencils or school bag, or concerned about how much homework we're going to get. It's important to remember that Jesus goes with us. He wants us to remember the things that are really important and will help make our life at work or school better – love, generosity, kindness etc.

Talk 3

Have a schoolbag and fill it with the following:

- *A pencil or pen (to do our work and write things down)*
- *A heart (God wants us to know that he loves us, but also that we must love one another)*
- *A pair of football shorts (we need the correct uniform and kit)*
- *A diary (we should be organised with our time – where does God fit in?)*
- *A reading book (we learn to read at school or we read books – what book might we also read (Bible))*
- *Bag of sweets (food – we also need to be generous)*
- *Other items might include things to represent kindness, peace, honesty, love etc.*

Ask people to pull out the various items one by one and see how they relate to going back to school. Talk about them. Explain that it is important to have God's love in our hearts as well as the right pens and pencils.

End all talks with...

If you'd like to bring your bags etc up to the front, we'll say a prayer of blessing over them.

+ God, bless these bags (uniforms...) and the child who will use it. Help them remember that you are with them as they learn and grow this year. Show them how to love you in school as in church, and give them your wisdom to learn. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Give each child a hand held cross to take to school.

You may wish to 'interview' very briefly one or two of the children/adults.

SONG

God's Family Prays

Prayer for Students (ask students to stand)

Lord our God, in your wisdom and love you surround us with the mysteries of the universe. Send your spirit upon these students and fill them with your wisdom and blessings. Grant that they may devote themselves to their studies and draw ever closer to you, the source of all knowledge. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for Teachers (ask teachers to stand)

Lord God, your spirit of wisdom fills the earth and teaches us in your ways. Look upon these teachers. Let them strive to share their knowledge with gentle patience and endeavour always to bring the truth to eager minds. Grant that we may follow Jesus Christ, the way, the truth and the life, forever and ever. Amen.

Prayer for us all (remain seated)

Bless, O God, each one gathered here that we will seek every opportunity to grow in our knowledge and love of you – in our schools, places of work and in our church. Grant that we may see you more clearly, love you more dearly, follow you more nearly.

End with this collect

God of wisdom and might, we praise you for the wonder of our being, for mind, body and spirit.

Be with our children as they begin a new school year.

Bless them and their teachers and staff.

Give them strength and grace as their bodies grow;

wisdom and knowledge to their minds as they search for understanding;

and peace and zeal to their hearts.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

God's Family Goes!

If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Church Family Notices can be given here.

Blessing:

+ As you journey to work and school each day, God bless you.

As you learn and grow in his way, God strengthen you.

As you teach and share and pray, God guide you.

and the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.

SONG

Song Suggestions:

One more step (trad)

Be thou my vision (trad)

Thank you Lord for this new day (trad)

Father, I place into your hands (trad)

We'll walk the land (Kendrick)

Shine Jesus shine (Kenrick)

October – Harvest – no gift too small: challenge for the Church

What you'll need for this service:

- Build a pillar of food for a local foodbank. This may take time so start advertising and appealing for tins of food in advance. Build the tins in a column shape or build them around one of your church's pillars!
- Tins with blank labels (Prayer option 2)
- Various world or UK breads (Prayer option 3)

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Display the foodbank tower and encourage people to bring items forward to add to it during the service at some point.

God's Family Gathers

Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme and lead into...

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG

God's Family Listens

Readings: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (or Psalm 34:4-10) and Matthew 21:23-32 (*could be acted out*)

Talk

Over the past few weeks we've been building a pillar of food to go to our local foodbank. Many people who are struggling at the moment will benefit from our donations and gifts.

Harvest is a time for us to celebrate and give thanks for God's creation – the plants, crops, animals and weather.

Harvest is also a time for us to reflect on our role and responsibilities within God's creation. Do we share what we have with those around us? How well do we care for God's creation?

Jesus told the story of the tenants in the vineyard, which was read to us. It's a reminder to us of our duty and responsibility to care for and love God's creation around us. If you watch the news you will see how we misuse and destroy God's creation – our lack of responsibility. That story Jesus told is also a reminder of our duty and responsibility to others – to our family, friends and neighbours.

Think about all the blessings in your life – the things God provides for us without us even realising. Think about the food we eat and the water we drink. Think about those around you, at home or at school, who need our love and friendship. Harvest is about remembering all that God has given us and it's a challenge to use his gifts wisely.

Many are less fortunate than ourselves and we must remember that God's love extends to them as much as it does to us – the poor, homeless, those struggling to find work, the hungry and so on. The gifts God gives us are not just for us alone, but for us to share with others, to look after and to show God's love to the world.

Using the gifts God has given to us is one of the most appropriate ways of demonstrating our gratitude to God for what he has done for us.

We're going to ask God to bless our pile of food for the foodbank and to bless us to, that we might share them and in doing so, share God's love.

Offer the gifts to God using a simple blessing.

SONG

God's Family Prays

Option 1 – use existing charity prayers

If you'd like your prayers/service to take on a more global feel, use some stories and prayer ideas from a charity website. Tearfund, Christian Aid etc.

Option 2 – tin prayers

Wrap lots of tins (empty or with beans in to give to foodbank) with blank white or coloured paper. Use the prayer pointers below and ask the congregation to write their prayer pointers on the tins. Prayers can include:

- *Thanksgiving for creation and God's gifts to us. Ask people to write on their tin something they want to give thanks for.*
- *Help that we may use those gifts wisely. Ask people to write a way in which they can use a gift in a better way.*
- *Prayers for those less fortunate. Ask people to write down those they need to pray for.*
- *Global – famine, drought, natural disaster, poverty. Ask people to write down those places in our world that need our prayers.*

Ask people to bring their tin forward and build a tower! This can be fun, but have someone there to supervise! Before giving full tins to the foodbanks, remember to remove the prayers.

Option 3 – bread prayers

Display a large map of the UK (or the world). Bake lots of different sorts of breads from around the UK (or world) and highlight those places on the map. When you pray for that place, area or country, share around the local bread for people to try and taste.

Naan bread – Pakistan

Soda bread – Ireland

Baguette – France

Use prayers for each area that use phrases from the readings if possible: 'O taste and see how good the Lord is...'
etc.

End with this collect

Creator God, you made the goodness of the land, the riches of the sea and the rhythm of the seasons; as we thank you for the harvest, may we cherish and respect this planet and its peoples, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

God's Family Goes!

If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Church Family Notices may be given here.

Blessing:

+ The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace. And the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.

SONG

Song Suggestions:

Come ye thankful people (trad)
Beauty for brokenness (Kendrick)
All creatures of our God and King (trad)
God in his love for us gave us this planet (trad)
He brought me to his banqueting table

Notes

November – Remembrance: hope for the Church

What you'll need for this service:

- Rocks or smooth pebbles, large enough for people to write on them. (Prayers)
- Marker pens, or pens that will write on stones.

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Gather or display some memorable events, situations or faces and ask people to recall the memorable time.

God's Family Gathers

Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme and lead into...

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG

God's Family Listens

Readings: Romans 8:31-end; Luke 22: 14-23

Talk

'Remembering' is a really important part of what it is to be human. We are constantly remembering things – names, places, faces, situations, events and so on. 'Do you remember... can you recall the time...'

Remembering is also a really important part of being a Christian. All the time we are in church we 'remember' all that Jesus did. In today's reading we hear about Jesus telling his friends about remembering. On the night that he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and gave thanks to God. *Lift up some bread.* He broke the bread and shared it round. *Break the bread and pass it round either side of the church.* He said that every time we break bread together we must remember Jesus. As you eat the bread coming round, remember something that Jesus said or did – maybe the time he healed someone, or the time when he said 'love one another'. *Allow time for this to happen.*

Remembering is a very powerful thing. When we look back we remember things that have happened. We might think of bad things that have happened – we remember wars and we use the poppy as a symbol that we've remembered those who died; we remember those who have died by marking their graves with a stone or a cross; we remember the times we've got things wrong and we promise not to go there again.

We might also remember good things that happen – a birthday or celebration; we remember those we love when we're not with them; we remember Jesus and we use bread as a symbol that we've remembered him.

All through history, Christians have always used a symbol to remember the things that God has done for them. *You may want to display images of items of the following:*

- A rainbow (to remember the earth being flooded to rid it of sin)
- A Lamb at Passover (when God set the Israelites free from slavery)
- An altar (to remember something special God had done for them)
- Baptism (God cleansing and moving over the waters)
- Communion (taking bread and wine)
- Bible (a document that helps us remember all that God has done)

What other symbols might we use to help us remember what God has done for us? Maybe you have your baptism certificate at home or your confirmation candle? Maybe you have an album full of photos of your family that help you remember God's love and grace in your life. Even the things around us in this church help us remember that God is at work.

At the end of your pews you will find a pile of rocks. Take a rock each and a marker pen. On your rock write a prayer or a word that helps you remember God's love and presence in your life and in the world.

Optional activity:

Before you start the talk, display some images (good and not so good) of events in history, or of memorable situations, places or faces. Ask people if they can 'remember.' You could do this as people enter.

SONG

God's Family Prays

After our prayers, we are going to create a symbol to help us remember that God is listening to our prayers and that he is here with us now.

Father God, we thank you that you're always with us. Help us to use the signs and symbols around us to remember that you always do amazing things for us – the cross to remember that Jesus gave his life for us, the Bible to tell us of all the things God has done for us, the church to remind us that God is at work in this community.

Father God, we pray for the church, a symbol of your family here on earth. We pray for N and N our bishops, N our priest and all who lead this family...

Father God, we pray for our world...

Father God, we thank you that you help us remember all you have done for us. We pray for those who cannot remember – for those who forget quickly or refuse your love, for those who have dementia and find it difficult to recall the past. For those who are sick or ill or who need our prayers at this time...

Father God, we thank you for doing great things in us. We give thanks for the times we've heard you speaking to us and for those times we've seen you do wonderful things. As we remember your love and faithfulness to us, we build you a prayer pile as a symbol of our love and faithfulness to you.

As the music plays bring forward your prayer rock and together we will build a prayer altar as a symbol of our remembrance that God is at work here, that he loves us and that his presence lives in us.

Ask people to come forward with their rock. Play some gentle music or sing a song as people come forward. Have someone supervise the building of the altar. If you can't manage building an altar, you may want to create a wailing wall or graffiti wall.

End with this collect

Almighty Father, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of all: govern the hearts and minds of those in authority and bring the families of the nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin, to be subject to his just and gentle rule; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

God's Family Goes!

If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Church Family Notices can be given here.

Blessing:

+ God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest;
to the church, the Queen, the commonwealth, and all humankind peace and concord; And to us and all his servants, life everlasting
And the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.

SONG

Song Suggestions:

The Lord's my shepherd (Townend)
Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us (trad)
Shalom, my friends (RSCM)
Jerusalem (*there are sometimes alternate words set to the same tune*)

Notes

Prayer Pile:



Extra: Mothering Sunday

What you'll need for this service:

- Posies of flowers for mothers and those who mother.
- Some pictures/photos of famous mothers.

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Prep a local school, Sunday school or church children's group to write poems and prayers for mothers.

God's Family Gathers

Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme and lead into...

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All Father, forgive us.

We do foolish and silly things...

All Father, forgive us.

+ May Almighty God, our Father and Mother, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG

God's Family Listens

Reading: Luke 1:46-55

Talk

'Sharing our love for mothers' – a chance for children to share their thoughts about mothering.

Prep a number of children in advance to write a simple poem or some thoughts on paper to read aloud during the service. You may be able to ask a local school to present some poems or pictures relating to Mothering Sunday.

Sum up the sermon-slot by saying that Mothering Sunday is for all who love and care for others, not just for those with children. God is described in the bible as being 'motherly' as well as 'fatherly'. We are all called to be mothers to those around us – that's how God's family works. Families look very different wherever you go – some people are single or unmarried, some families have young children, some don't. We are all God's children so that we might all be mothers to others.

You may want to show some pictures of some 'great' mothers, like the BVM, Mother Teresa (and embarrass a few mothers in the congregation with old school photos!) Sum up by saying that God gives us the qualities for Mothering and when we embrace them we find ourselves able to do amazing things.

SONG

God's Family Prays

The Mother's Union website is always very good as a resource for prayers for Mothering Sunday.

Prayers should be short and punchy but include:

- Prayers for mothers across the world
- Thanksgiving for all who are motherly
- Prayers for mothers who find it difficult
- For all families in every situation and context

Dear Jesus, We thank you for all mothers and carers around the world, and for all they do for their children. We thank you for their patience when we don't get things right. We thank you for their encouragement when we find life hard. We pray that mums would feel really special today and that you would remind us every day to show them as much love and help as they give to us. Amen.

Other ideas

During the prayers you might like to ask people to write their prayers on a card flower and bring it up to form a large bunch of flowers. The prayers might reflect this.

During the talk the leader could ask the congregation what families might 'look' like. You might get answers such as single people, marriage, children, two adults, an orphan... the leader can go on to illustrate that God's family has no definitions or boundaries, it doesn't look like a 'normal' family – it is a family of all sorts of different people whom God loves. You may want to have a few pictures of different 'families' on hand – the Royal Family, the Holy Family, the Adams Family etc...

A distribution of flowers is usually traditional on Mothering Sunday. Use the time to play some suitable music (a worship song) or read a scripture verse or poem as the children give out the posies.

Use the voices of the children to portray how family life reflects God's love and care for us. Bear in mind however that not all children have a settled or particularly good family life, indeed not all adults do either. Avoid this service becoming too 'nice' or 'feminine' and aim to put emphasis on the Church Family as a model for family life.

End prayers with the Mothering Sunday collect:

God of love, passionate and strong, tender and careful:
watch over us and hold us all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Church Family Notices can be given here.

Blessing:

*+ May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother's care, send us out to live and work for others.
And the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.*

SONG

Song Suggestions:

Jesus put this song into hearts
Dear Mary, mother of the Lord
Thank Lord for this new day
Abba Father
Tell out my soul

Notes

What you'll need for this service:

Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.

God's Family Gathers

On this day it's good to begin with silence, or at least no music as people enter. This is a gentle service. If possible, the church should reflect this – no lights, decoration or symbols.

A short drama/sketch unfolds... find a short drama that illustrates the situation we find ourselves in – Jesus has died and we are left feeling disappointed, but hopeful...

SONG

Introduce the Confession briefly...

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

All **Father, forgive us.**

We do foolish and silly things...

All **Father, forgive us.**

Absolution: + Our wrong doings put Jesus on the cross, but by his wounds we are healed and made new. (Isa. 53:5)

SONG

God's Family Listens

Reading 1: Luke 23:44-49 Jesus dies on the cross.

Talk

Oh dear. Jesus said he had come to save us. A King. A Saviour! What a let down! Now in the story, he dies on a cross – the way of a criminal. He was a “criminal” in a way – he upset the peace, he gave the high priests a headache, he taught people who were fighting with one another to love.

For teaching us the love of God they drove nails through his hands and feet and left him there to die. It's a bit embarrassing really.

The King of the World dying.

The Prince of Love dying.

God dying.

In a world that thinks God doesn't love them, we look to the cross to say he does! In a world where terrorism* seems to be part of everyday life, we look to the cross to see how we can live in peace. In a world where it's hard to be a Christian and to love God, we look at the cross and we see God saying: 'I love you this much!'

He died that we might be forgiven,

He died to make us good.

*That we might go at last to heaven
Saved by his precious blood.*

Today, it's OK to look at the cross and feel a bit sad. It's OK to look and feel relieved or even glad. As we look at what Jesus did for us, what we are really seeing is heaven opened – a life with God forever, if we want it. When we watch Jesus suffer and die, we remember all that is wrong in our world and in our lives – the people of *Brussels, Syria, those who are sick or ill – we remember them and say: that will simply not do – that is not the way God wants it to be.

As we look at the cross on Good Friday, we can be assured that God's love for us is the giving of himself to us. We look, and we remember that the cross is not the end. The cross is a long way from the end, in fact it's not even the beginning – on Sunday we recall the next part of the story – a story that still goes on. A story that involves you... as we look at the cross today, we can rejoice that that story is a story of God's love for each and every one of us.

**Insert relevant and up to date news items and concerns.*

SONG

God's Family Prays

Prayers to include:

- *World*
- *Church*
- *Those who suffer*
- *Our own prayers*
- *Bring prayers up and pin/hang to the cross of Jesus.*

End with the Good Friday Collect

Eternal God, in the cross of Jesus we see the cost of our sin and the depth of your love: in humble hope and fear may we place at his feet all that we have and all that we are, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord's Prayer (Modern)

SONG

God's Family Goes!

All **We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

Notice of Easter service may be given, but other notices should be kept to a minimum.

NO BLESSING on Good Friday

Reading 2: Luke 23:50-end – Jesus placed in the tomb

SONG

Song Suggestions:

There is a green hill far away (trad)
For God so loved the world (Hardwick)
My song is love unknown
You laid aside your majesty
There is a redeemer (Green)

Notes

family@church

Baptism Insert

If families have returned to collect Baptismal Candle, Bible and Certificates...

Service runs as normal...

PRAYERS and LORD'S PRAYER

SONG

Invite the newly baptised to the front with their family. You may wish to invite godparents as well. Think about space, especially if you have a few families to welcome.

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism:

N and N, by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.

Candles (and bible) are given.

We welcome you into the fellowship of faith;
we are children of the same heavenly Father;
we welcome you.

Greet the newly baptised with a round of applause.

God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness
and has given us a place with the saints in light.
You have received the light of Christ;
walk in this light all the days of your life.

We say together the words on the back of your order of service:

**All Shine as a light in the world
to the glory of God the Father.**

CREED

**All We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family...**

The service continues as normal...