

Exploring Worship and Mission

Worship beyond Words



A series of workshops designed to help local congregations explore different aspects of worship and their relation to mission



Aim: to explore non-verbal approaches to worship as a way of engaging the whole person – body, mind, emotion – in encounter with God.

Mission Thinking:



We live in an age where experience is key. People have short attention spans. A picture is often used to reinforce a message and works so well we don't even need the words any more.

Many things heighten our awareness of life. The taste of peppermint, the feel of the breeze on our skin, the smell of oranges – all evoke different feeling in people that can take them back to times past or augment their present experience.

Some church traditions tend to rely predominantly on words with little non-verbal "colour". In others, the signs and rituals used – (i.e. the non verbal elements of worship) are so far removed from everyday life that those who come new to them may feel confused and fail to understand their meaning.

So we shall explore ways of worshipping that do not rely on words, and also ways of adding non-verbal cues to our words, so their meaning is enhanced.

Worship can change us and empower us for service. Worship is a time of giving to and receiving from God and giving and receiving from each other.

Worship should be sufficiently rich and varied to touch the hearts of all.

The purpose of this workshop is to open our eyes to different possibilities – to new and effective ways of bringing the message of the Good News of God's love to all people.

Objectives:



- 1) to reflect on different kinds of non-verbal worship and to experience some of these
- 2) to stimulate creative, practical thinking?

Preparation

Timing: These worksheets are designed for sessions of about 1¾ hrs. BUT there is too much material here to cover in that time!

There is an outline programme overleaf giving details of how the workshop should be developed. However there is enough material here to expand into two evening sessions or a full day session. It is important to pick out what best suits your group and local circumstances

Take time to think through what you want to do and adapt the material accordingly.

Some activities require preparation. Ensure that you have all the materials necessary for your chosen programme.

Leaders. It is useful to have more than one leader. One can act as scribe while the other speaks. Both may visit and encourage small groups, particularly during "Create!"

Exploring Worship and Mission

Worship beyond Words



1. Suggested timetable

- A. Arrivals games – one only
- B. Welcome
- C. Warm up
- D. What is it?
- E. Explore! Option – one only
- F. Create!
- G. Show and Tell
- H. Mission Possible?
- I. Worship

2. Arrivals icebreaker

up to 5 minutes past allotted start time

Either a) Feely/smelly time

As people arrive, direct them to a 'Feely Corner' or 'smelly Corner' (your choice). On a table place various cloth bags each containing either something to touch (e.g. half a lemon, an old sock!). Invite people to write down on paper what they think is in each bag

Or

b) the writing's on the wall

Display some quotations on large posters. (rolls of lining paper are cheap and effective and can be used for the Create! element as well).

As people arrive direct them to read the quotations and choose the one with which they most agree and the one with which they most disagree.

3. Groups

Aim for mixed groups of around 5-6 people. If you are including more than one 'Explore!' session you may want rearrange the groups for the second activity.

4. Workshop space

Ideally one large, comfortable room plus some smaller? rooms. In the small group work those who those who are hard of hearing may like to go to a place where it is easier to concentrate.

If you plan to include the section create!, then an area for painting or gluing, listening to music, cooking etc should be prepared.

Include:

- Answers to arrival game a) or a quick vote on b)
- Words of explanation of about the purpose and structure of the session
- And an opening prayer.

5. Warm up

(Duration 5 minutes)

Ask each person in turn to say their name and how they are feeling – a quick 'gut reaction' is best. E.g. My name is Sarah and I feel nervous; my name is John and I feel excited etc.

Or

Ask each person to imagine they are a chocolate bar (or an animal or a colour) what would they be? This kind of exercise can work well with a younger group but may be more difficult for some older adults – use your judgement!

6. What is it? Exploring non-verbal worship

(Duration 15 minutes)

LARGE GROUP WORK You will need: Flip chart/white board, suitable pens.

Brainstorm, and write on a flip chart/white board different forms of non-verbal expression that the group can think of. It may help to recall 5 senses in turn, to prompt responses.

Next draw a star against any of the examples given that anyone has experienced in worship.

?Are there any further worship ideas that you want to add to the list?

? How can worship with greater emphasis on the non-verbal, help us in our mission?

It may be useful to note your response to this question as a record for the worship leaders.

Exploring Worship and Mission

Worship beyond Words



7. Explore! Looking at ways of using non-verbal expression in worship

(Duration 20 minutes)

SMALL GROUP WORK

Each group will need paper and pens. Keep brief notes and give these to the leaders as a record of the workshop.

Either

1: Elements of worship.

Give each group one of the following elements to consider:

Call and Approach; Confession; Thanksgiving; Confessions and Absolution; Bible reading; Intercession; Hymns and Songs; All Age talk; Sermon; Communion; Blessing and Sending.

The group has 2 tasks:

A Think of some ways of expressing this elements without words (refer back to the brainstorming ideas)

B Think of ways of expressing this element using words together with non verbal expression.

If the group finishes before 20 minutes suggest that they discuss a different element. If they haven't finished, avoid giving extra time or the workshop could overrun.

8. Create!

(Duration 25 minutes)

Putting ideas into practice, providing further inspiration. Ask the group to choose some of their ideas and to put them into practice using materials provided. Provide paper of different sizes and colours, pens, glue, scissors, crayons, paints, a scrap box, stones, pebbles, shells, material, music and something to play it on, candles, water – as many different things as you can think of. Art books and prints of work of art are also useful. Remind the group to consider what kind of space they want to create for worship as well.

During this time it is useful for the leaders to visit the group to encourage them and to pick up some of the ideas to use in a short act of worship to close the workshop.

Encouraging is important. Adults in particular can find it hard to be creative if they stopped doing this at Junior school and find this task daunting, if not threatening. Keep an eye on group dynamics to check everyone is feeling included in this task and try and find ways to help them back in if they have opted out.

Give people plenty of warnings about time and make sure they spend the last 5 minutes tidying up so you don't get left with it all.

Exploring Worship and Mission Worship beyond Words

or

2: Different services of worship.

Give each group a different type of worship service to consider e.g. Baptism; Pentecost; Easter Sunday; Trinity; Good Friday; A service using the reading for the next Sunday: Communion (looking at the service as a whole not just the sacrament)

The group has one task:

To suggest some different ways of using non verbal expression during the worship, both to 'stand alone' and to complement the words used in the services – refer back to the brainstorming ideas.

9. Mission Possible?

(Duration 10 minutes)

LARGE GROUP WORK

- Take feedback on what participants have learned from the various activities. Has anything been discovered which is relevant to worship in their own congregation?
- Make a list of some do's and don'ts of non-verbal expression

e.g.

Do use imagination;

Don't do the same thing every week.

Do think whether people will find some activities threatening;

Don't forget to use the whole worship space

Closing worship

(Duration 10 minutes)

- An exhibition of related art
- Could be part of the worship