

Exploring Worship and Mission

Introductory Workshop



The first of a series of workshops designed to help local congregations explore different aspects of worship and their relation to mission.



AIM: To explore what it means to worship in the context of God's mission.

MISSION THINKING:



In worship we gather as a community which is subject to God. We ascribe 'worth' (i.e. respect, honour, merit etc.) to God.

We attempt to align our vision with God's vision and our will with God's purpose. We offer ourselves to be instruments of God's activity.

Worship must be more than simply an enjoyable experience. If in worship we connect with God and with God's mission, then we will naturally engage more deeply with the world in all its God-given potential and its brokenness.

Exploring worship as a missionary activity means considering:

1. To what extent we involve the whole congregation (not just the worship leader)
2. To what extent we involve the whole person (body and spirit as well as the mind)
3. To what extent we embrace the whole of life, as we encounter God in worship

OBJECTIVES:



This workshop offers participants the opportunity to:

1. Consider what we mean by 'worship'.
2. Reflect on connections between worship and mission, in our own experience.
3. Identify practical ways in which worship may become more mission-focussed.

PRACTICAL MATTERS:

(Preparation:)

1. Opening and closing worship
2. Photocopied map of the local area (one copy per two or three people)

YOU WILL ALSO NEED:

- Flipchart and markers pens
- Map of the world
- Map pins or small stickers

TIMING:

- Allow 1 ½ hours

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1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

(Duration 10 minutes)

1.1 Open the session with a reading e.g. Ephesians 1:2 – 10 and a prayer.

1.2 Introduce the purpose and outline of the workshop.

1.3 Clarify domestic arrangements, introducing themselves in turn by saying:

1.4 Invite participants introducing themselves in turn by saying:

- a) their name,
- b) where they are from.

2. WHAT IS WORSHIP?

(Duration 10 minutes)

2.1 Brainstorm. Invite the group to call out words or phrases which they associate with the world "worship". Write these up on a flipchart.

2.2 Point out that the root of the world is "worth-ship". Note any of the suggestions offered which convey this idea.

2.3 Point out that worship is a missionary activity because we allow ourselves to become 'caught up' in God's mission. Note any of the suggestions offered which convey this idea.

3. WORSHIP AS A MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

(Duration 20 minutes)

3.1 Hand out photocopied sheets showing the local area. Invite people to mention places which are significant to them (e.g. where I work, the doctor's surgery, where I was hit by a car/mugged).

Discuss: how can we engage with the experience of people's lives more effectively in worship?

3.2 Now display a world map (Peters' projection if possible).



Example of Peters' Projection

Discuss the links that exist in worship with different parts of the world (e.g. church members or visitors from other countries, use of CWM prayers, songs from the world church, Christian Aid posters). Mark significant places on the map with pins or stickers.

Discuss: how can we engage more effectively with the local and wider world in worship?

4. IN OUR EXPERIENCE...

(Duration 20 minutes)

4.1 Buzz groups.

(Duration 10 minutes)

Invite everyone to think of specific example(s) of "worship which has inspired me or changed me", and to share these, in groups of two or three.

4.2 Feedback.

(Duration 10 minutes)

Ask for comments as to what it was that made your chosen experience of worship powerful.

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5. INGREDIENTS OF MISSION-FOCUSSED WORSHIP

(Duration 20 minutes)

5.1 Distil some practical suggestions that have been made during discussions so far. List them on the flipchart.

5.2 Invite, and add to the list, further suggestions as to how we engage the whole congregation and the whole person in worship e.g. who plan and leads worship?

5.3 What use is made of sound, silence, symbol, colour, and movement? (See next page)

5.4 Invite, and add to the list, further suggestions as to how we engage the business of our daily lives and the agenda of the wider world in our worship.

5.5 Decide together what should happen to the list that has been compiled. Is there anyone who is not present who should see it? Is there anything which any church represented would like to implement immediately? Are there areas that you would like to explore more fully? If so, what is the next step?

6. CLOSING WORSHIP

(Duration 10 minutes)

Close with a short act of worship, including a song from the world church and one or more of the ideas that have emerged from the discussions. The maps used in section 3 could make a visual focus for worship.

Why not explore specific aspects of worship in relation to mission using other workshop outlines in this series: Creating Liturgy; Praying Together; Worship in Music; Worship Beyond Words; Sacred Spaces; Telling the Good News: Drama in Worship.

NOTES FOR LEADERS

FIVE ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

Throughout Christian history, these elements have played their part in worship. Different cultures and traditions have emphasised some more than others, but each still has its place in the total experience of Christian worship.

The following points are intended as a prompt for discussion.

SOUND

The human voice speaking, or singing. Solo voice, small group, or the whole congregation.

Instrumental sounds. Which instruments? Live or record music.

Other sounds which evoke meaning in a specific context, e.g. recorded sounds of animals, or a baby crying (Nativity services); a cockerel crowing (Maundy Thursday).

SILENCE

Can happen naturally e.g. during communion, a baptism or wedding

Often we need a focus for using silence e.g. something to pray about, think about or look at.

SYMBOL

Visual symbols e.g. cross, candle, a chain, barbed wire...

Symbolic actions e.g. exchange of weddings rings, breaking bread, sharing the peace, lighting a candle. flour

COLOUR

- Banners of flowers reflecting the liturgical season
- What colour(s) does the minister wear, and what does this convey?

MOVEMENT

- From one part of the worship space to another e.g. preacher moves to the pulpit; or new members move forward to make a commitment.
- Use of hands and body posture in prayer and in praise.
- Drama, mime, dance.
- Procession.

Non-verbal aspects of worship are at least as important as the verbal content. They help to make worship inclusive; people can respond irrespective of age or education background.

(Based on material produced by the Wild Goose resource Group. The Iona Community, Scotland)