



WORSHIP CHANGES LIVES – Supporting Resources

BASICS

Hard-Wired for Worship?

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Extracts from Psalm 139

O Lord, you have searched me out and known me; •
you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.....

For there is not a word on my tongue, •
but you, O Lord, know it altogether.....

Where can I go then from your spirit? •
Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I take the wings of the morning •
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

Even there your hand shall lead me, •
your right hand hold me fast.

For you yourself created my inmost parts; •
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I thank you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; •

Extracts from Psalm 18

I love you, O Lord my strength. •
The Lord is my crag, my fortress and my deliverer,
My God, my rock in whom I take refuge, •
my shield, the horn of my salvation and my stronghold.

I cried to the Lord in my anguish •
and I was saved from my enemies.

Worship is the act of freely giving love to God. Even when people have no verbal language for worship, they use acts and symbols to express their knowledge of and response to some life force beyond their own. Research shows that young children have an innate spirituality that they become conscious of as older children, and then become embarrassed about as teenagers. By the time people reach young adulthood, some have become enthusiastic about spirituality, but many are quite detached. If only we could lose our inhibitions about worship and discover again a child-like freedom to worship.

Looking AT

- Watch children during church services. How do they like to worship?
- Can you describe an act of worship you have attended that was totally 'awesome'?

Looking IN

- How much difference does the place or time or atmosphere of worship make to you?
- Are there times when you do not feel like worship? Are there particular things that contribute to making you feel this way about worship?

Looking OUT

- What might you do to help of support people (including church leaders) at times when they don't feel like worship?
- What do you think a complete newcomer to your church would notice first? What would you like them to notice and think about it?
- If a church service were a completely blank canvas, what picture would you paint of the best worship ever?

Looking DEEPER

Ronni Lamont, *Understanding Children, Understanding God* (SPCK, 2007)

David Hay and Rebecca Nye, *The Spirituality of the Child* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006)

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
have mercy on me, a sinner*



A Romanian representation of the Jesus Prayer

Sometimes words live in our memory and pop up when we least expect them. Words from the marriage service and funerals, for example, are known by most of us; we have heard them (though not always accurately!) in television dramas and soaps. The more we use words and prayers which talk of God, the more they will live in our consciousness. St Paul talks about us 'praying without ceasing' (1 Thessalonians 5.17). Of course we still need to concentrate on the things around us – driving the car, having a conversation, sleeping – but it is an attitude of mind and heart.

Looking AT

- Are there prayers you know from memory? When did you learn them?
- Some traditional hymns have had words changed. Find some examples, and say if you think each change helpful or unhelpful.

Looking IN

- Are there words that you find particularly helpful or unhelpful in church?
- If you have ever taken part in a service without any service books, how did that feel?
- Do you prefer words or silence? Are there times when you find silence particularly helpful or unhelpful?

Looking OUT

- Make a list of words that are often used in church, but which newcomers or non-Christians might find unfamiliar. Which of these do you think are 'essential words' for Christians?
- It is sometimes said that the language of worship is not the language of everyday life. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a special 'register' of language for worship?

Looking DEEPER

'The Four Texts' in *Common Worship: Christian Initiation* (CHP, 2006), pp 40-47 – also at http://www.transformingworship.org.uk/TransformingWorship/?page_id=92

The URC Hymnal *Rejoice and Sing!* (OUP, 1991) includes altered, inclusive lyrics

Hymns Old and New (Complete Anglican Edition) (Kevin Mayhew, 2000) includes several substantially re-written 'traditional' hymns (e.g. numbers 531, 617)

J MacLeod 'Almighty Mistake', *Theology*, March/April 2005

Order for a 'Silent Eucharist' in Gill Ambrose ed., *Together for a Season: All-age Resources for Lent, Holy Week and Easter* (CHP, 2007), p 31

We sometimes find it hard to change our posture in church. It is easier to sit and watch the action at the front than to participate. But sometimes, the very action of kneeling or standing might cause us to join in the service in a new way. Increasingly, services include some form of interactive and multi-sensory prayer. We might be asked to move around the church to 'prayer stations'. The majority of the population learns best when it not only sees or hears something, but when it is also able to join in by 'doing.'

Looking AT

- Imagine listening on the radio to a Sunday service at your church. List the actions that take place in the service that you would not see.

Looking IN

- Sometimes in church we kneel to pray and sometimes we stand. What do these postures say, and what are the advantages of each?'
- What about lifting up your hands when you are praying or singing?
- Do you find moving around the church during worship helpful, or is it distracting for you?
- Have there been times you have avoided coming to church – what brought you back?

Looking OUT

- Are there ways of involving people in your services who like to be physically involved in worship (kinaesthetic learners)?
- What special occasions or events can you think of that might give an opportunity for special services including action or movement (e.g. a Palm Sunday procession).
- Have you visited churches where you have sensed there was a particular welcome for different groups of people (e.g. older people, children, young people, disabled people). What did you see that made you feel these people were valued there?

Looking DEEPER

- What would a newcomer to your church think about it?

Tim Lomax, *Freedom in Worship, Freedom within a Framework* and *More Freedom within a Framework* (Kevin Mayhew, 2001, 2002)

Sue Wallace, *Multi-sensory Worship* and *Multi-sensory Prayer* (Scripture Union, 2000)

Gill Ambrose, Peter Craig-Wild, Diane Craven, Mary Hawes, Peter Moger *Together for a Season* (CHP 2006, 2007)

Most of us take photographs, with cameras and on video, and now with phones. They can remind us of good times and special memories. Films, music, books, poems and prayers can also remind us of significant moments. Worship is more than just remembrance. On a time line, not only do we live in the present, but as Christians we live in the eternal too. When we pray, we are part of God's purpose which extends from creation to the end of the world, though we tend to forget this.

Looking At

- What are your most powerful memories of childhood?
- Memories are often multi-sensory, involving sight, sound, touch, smell. Describe some particular memories of worship that involved each of the senses.

Looking IN

- What things help you remember Jesus? (Some of these might be particular parts of services, but some might be completely different experiences, and not necessarily part of worship.)
- What do you think Jesus would think of your local church or place of worship?
- If you had to move to a new place tomorrow, what memories of your church would you like to take away?
- Can you think of a memory of yours that has led you to action?

Looking OUT

- What memories of your church do you think a newcomer might take away with them?
- At your church, what things could make a visitor feel warmly welcomed? What might possibly make them feel some exclusion or isolation?

Looking DEEPER

Get your church architect or a member of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) to show you around your church building, and to think about how it might be better used.

Robin Gibbons, *House of God: House of God's People* (Alcuin / SPCK, 2006)

Richard Giles, *Re-pitching the Tent* (Canterbury Press, 2004)

Richard Giles, *Creating Uncommon Worship* (Canterbury Press, 2004)

David Stancliffe, 'Creating Sacred Space: Liturgy and Architecture Interacting' in David Brown and Ann Loades, ed, *The Sense of the Sacramental* (SPCK, 1995)

The website <http://www.churchcare.co.uk> has useful material on the development of church buildings for mission. See also the website of the Church of England

Cathedrals and Church Buildings Division

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/cathandchurchbuild/>

DVD: *Mr Bean Goes to Church* – is relevant for a discussion of worship and welcome.

See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3b2WdZq17M>, purchase at

<http://www.amazon.com/Best-Bits-Mr-Bean/dp/B00000K32E>

BIG QUESTION

Someone once took a group of church leaders to a betting shop to show them how uncomfortable it is to be outside your normal environment, and in a place where you might not know how to behave and what to do.

- **Can you remember the first time you went to your church?**
- **How welcoming is your church to people who are new to worship?**
- **Do you make it easy for them to join in?**

Hilary Brand, *What am I doing here* (CHP, June 2008)

Alison Gilchrist, *Creating a culture of welcome in the local church* (Grove Books, 2004)