

Celebrating Communion

Leader's Handbook

Parish Based Adult Religious Education

Prism Series No. 1

PREFACE

This programme was commissioned by the Liturgical Advisory Committee for General Synod in the follow up to the introduction of the *Book of Common Prayer* in 2004. The publication of the new Prayer Book provided a great opportunity for parishioners in the Church of Ireland to reflect upon shared worship, in this case the service of Holy Communion Two.

'Celebrating Communion' is the first in the Prism Series of parish based liturgical educational resources. Ultimately, its objective is to encourage a thinking faith and a lived out understanding of what it is to be drawn by God's grace into communion with each other and with God in Christ.

Whereas this programme will be beneficial to all members of the community, it may also serve in the training of those who administer the bread and wine during a service and those who will be commissioned to give Communion by Extension to the housebound.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this programme is to enable participants to look deeper into their faith and to explore the connection that exists between worship and life. Over five weeks, the five elements of Holy Communion Two are studied:

- **Gathering of God's People**
- **Proclaiming and Receiving of God's Word**
- **Prayers of the People**
- **Celebrating at the Lord's Table**
- **The Going Out as God's People**

Participants will be invited to reflect upon their life experience, to look at the scriptures, to understand the actual details of the Holy Communion service and to improve upon the manner in which they worship together as a community.

Each person will be actively encouraged to find their voice, to share their experience, wisdom, questions and insights and to gain a deeper understanding of what they are doing as they celebrate Holy Communion.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The leader of this programme will need to prepare well, pray about the session and commit the work to God before and after each session.

Venue: The group needs to meet in a comfortable environment, where there is space enough to move into

smaller groups and where it is quiet enough to converse and pray uninterrupted.

From the outset of the course, it is very important that each participant will need to have his or her own copy of the *Book of Common Prayer* for use during the sessions and at home.

Groups should have ideally between eight and twelve members, preferably reflecting the diversity of age and interest in the parish. On its first run, a mixture of both invited and self-selecting participants is suggested.

Each session will be covered in 90 minutes. It is strongly advisable to keep to the proposed times for the activities within the modules, this prevents boredom and the session becoming hijacked by an issue or an individual.

Regarding confidentiality, it is very important to get a commitment from everyone on the programme that anything *personal* that is said during a session stays there. Respect and trust are key to any open discussion in a parish.

Many good ideas vis-à-vis the ordering of worship may emerge. One possible outcome could be the setting up of a parish liturgy group. Group leaders may like to keep a record of the ideas that come from the group for later consideration within the ministries of the parish.

UNDERSTANDING GROUP DISCUSSION

People tend to fall into certain behaviour patterns when in group discussion. There are the people who-

- challenge
- speak openly and easily
- genuinely listen

- allow shy members space to formulate their thoughts
- agree to differ with respect
- clarify issues
- or summarise points made

However, there can also be people who repeatedly-

- get a laugh at all costs
- dominate
- assume the role of the expert
- block discussion or throw in 'red herrings' and distract concentration
- become passive in the presence of a dominant voice or a conflict of opinions
- talk only to the person beside them
- make points after the session rather than within
- take offence at a difference of opinion

There are a few easy ways of keeping the sessions on course.

1. Stick to the objectives. If you keep your eye on the ball, discussion will not wander off the topic too much.
2. Agree at the first session that each sit beside a different person each week.
3. Humour is great; it can break the ice and relax everybody. However, when someone is *continually* controlling or undermining the group through humour, the leader will have to be aware of this and draw the group to the task at hand.
4. Facilitators will have to be assertive with dominant people in the group, know where the discussion is

meant to go and prevent the session becoming 'stuck' or side-tracked. If it is agreed that no one person speaks a second time unless all the others have spoken, this can ensure at least a consciousness that there are other voices in the group.

5. Resist the temptation to ask a question only as a pretext of giving the answer.
6. Actively encourage quieter members by providing both the time and opportunity for them to share their insights on the matter. Referring back to what a passive member has said earlier in discussion can encourage further engagement.
7. Discussion about how the session went is natural but a pattern may develop where a person says repeatedly to the leader, '*What I wanted to say during the session was...*'. Redirect people to say what they need to say within the group, each person must take responsibility for their own opinions and views.

Differences of opinion are a healthy sign in any discussion - when all agree all the time, something is going seriously wrong. A key element of successful discussion is the emergence of different perspectives without such differences becoming personalised.

LEADING THE PROGRAMME

Each session is structured in a similar manner, is led by guiding objectives, ends with worship and a recommendation that a psalm be read at home each day.

Objectives

These are the guiding principles that keep the sessions moving. You can measure the success of the unit according to the manner in which the objectives are achieved. If you keep your eye on them, they will steer the progress of the group.

Materials

Before you start the session, make sure you have all these items gathered and ready.

Experience

Each module opens with reference to the experience of the people in the group. Remember this is only a starting activity, so be careful to work within the suggested time constraints.

Questions

The questions listed are intended to guide and give direction to the sessions. You do not need to cover all or limit yourself to them. However, they are written with a specific focus on the objective at hand.

Scripture

Each unit will focus on one or more excerpts from scripture, central to the theme. If you or participants wish to refer to other related passages from scripture – great!

Liturgy

Participants will be actively encouraged to become familiar with the *Book of Common Prayer* and focus during each session on a specific part of the Holy Communion Two service.

Worship

At the end of every session, there is an act of worship - you may like to use a hymn or to play some music from a CD. Feel free to develop this section or to encourage participants to lead the worship.

Psalms

People will be requested to read a psalm each day using the *Book of Common Prayer*. Week One asks people to read psalms 1-7, Week Two, to read Psalms 8-15 etc. It is hoped that this will become part and parcel of the participants' prayer life long after the sessions are over.

Leader's Notes

Where appropriate some brief background information, guidelines or exegesis is provided for the leader to inform his or her facilitation of group learning.

Evaluation

At the end of each session, each participant will be invited to write a short evaluation in their handbook, what they learned and what questions remain.

1. THE GATHERING OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Book of Common Prayer, pp. 201-203

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this session are to –

- 1** *foster an understanding that worship is a 'gathering' of people, as they are, to meet God in Christ*
- 2** *help participants to understand the liturgical elements of that 'gathering' as greeting, penitence and praise*

MATERIALS

- ✓ Handbook for each person
- ✓ A *Book of Common Prayer* for each person
- ✓ A bowl of water

EXPERIENCE (15 minutes)

Discussion

- Where do you gather to meet other people?
(*Sports club / Work / Evening classes / Choir / Church*)
- Why do people gather?
(*Common interest / Common task / Location*)
- How did you feel the first time you went into a group?

(Did you go alone? With someone? Were you nervous?)

- What helped you integrate or feel at home in the group?
(Friendly people?)
- Have you ever visited a church that is not your own? What welcome did you receive and how did you feel? What was helpful? What was not helpful?

SCRIPTURE (25 minutes)

Luke 7:36-50

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment.

She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him- that she is a sinner."

Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak."

"A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he

cancelled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly."

Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair.

You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.

Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little."

Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace.

Leader's Notes

The Pharisee in this text is a Christian and represents all those in the early community of the church who wished to adhere to the rigorous laws of ritual cleanliness that were upheld in Judaism. The contrast is between the extraordinary honouring of Jesus of the ritually unclean 'outsider' and the polite but meagre hospitality of the

supposedly righteous. The theme is reminiscent of Acts 15.

There is no evidence that the woman was a prostitute, there are sins other than sexual. However she certainly was an outsider according to the standards of the host. In the eyes of Jesus, her love and repentance displayed a depth of faith that far exceeded the mean spiritedness of smug religious observance.

Discussion

Who made the woman feel welcome?

- Unwelcome? (*Pharisees, disciples*)
- How? (*Saw her simply as an outsider, a sinner*)
- Who was the focus of her attention?
- How did she show her feelings?
- (*Bathed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, kissed and anointed his feet with ointment.*)
- What did she experience in Jesus that the disciples overlooked? (*None are excluded from the love of God.*)
- 'We are united more by our sinfulness.'
- What do you think?

LITURGY (30 minutes)

Greeting

The Holy Communion Service begins with a greeting (p.201).

- What does the greeting say?
- How helpful or unhelpful is it to use a familiar greeting?

Penitence

Leader's Notes

Briefly note the place of repentance at the outset of our gathering as a worshipping community. We come together as sinners in individual and personal need of God's forgiveness and grace. Through the declaration of this sinfulness in the confession, we declare as individuals our need of grace. In Absolution, we are united by the generous forgiveness of God.

If the Kyries are read instead of Confession, there is an even greater sense that clergy and people are united in a corporate declaration of sinfulness. (See pp. 224-236)

Discussion

- List the elements included in the Penitential section. (p.202-203).
- What is the function of each part?

Match up the answers:

Commandments /
Beatitudes

Personal reflection

Introduction to Penitence

Acceptance of forgiveness

Silence

Setting God's standards

General Confession

Assurance of forgiveness

Absolution

Confessing together

Leader's Notes

Commandments etc:	Setting God's standards
Introduction etc:	Assurance of forgiveness
Silence:	Personal reflection
General Confession:	Confessing together
Absolution:	Acceptance of forgiveness.

Discussion

- Is it appropriate that the Penitential Section may be at the beginning of the service? Why?
- Do you think confession is 'personal' or 'corporate' or both? Explain.
- Should people stand or kneel for this part of the service? Why?
- Identify the key words in the Absolution. How does it make you feel when you listen to it?

WORSHIP (10 minutes)

Repentance

- ❖ Fill a bowl of water and place it on a table in the centre of the group
- ❖ Read Psalm 51 by alternate verse
- ❖ Select one of the *Penitential Kyries* (pp. 224-236) which you find particularly meaningful
- ❖ Pass the bowl of water around the circle or take turns to come to the bowl in the middle

- ❖ Each person says one line of a Kyrie as they put their hand into the bowl of water

Gloria

- ❖ We have reflected upon the manner in which we gather as a community and how we prepare for worship together. We have repented, as directed by Jesus and now we praise God in the *Gloria*, p. 203.
- ❖ Read the *Gloria* together or share a verse from a hymn, or psalm that expresses the glory of God for you.

(The leader begins the sharing
with his or her own choice.)

AT HOME

During the coming week, commit yourself to 10-15 minutes in quiet prayer each day.

Read a psalm a day from Psalms 1-7 in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Write the verse or verses that strike you meaningfully from each psalm.

2. THE PROCLAIMING AND RECEIVING OF GOD'S WORD

Book of Common Prayer pp. 204-5

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this session are to -

- 1. foster an expectation that God will speak in and through scripture*
- 2. help people to understand the way the Word of God is read and explained in worship*

MATERIALS

- ✓ Handbook for each person
- ✓ *A Book of Common Prayer* for each person
- ✓ A Bible
- ✓ Gospel reference for the following Sunday

EXPERIENCE (15 minutes)

Leader's Notes

Before you begin this second session, invite participants to share some of the lines from the psalms that they found meaningful in their prayer during the week. Invite comments on how they found

identifying a meaningful verse, whether it helped give focus to prayer etc..

Discussion

Divide into groups of 3 and write some rules for good active listening. (5 minutes)

Share these with the larger group. (10 minutes)

- How do you know someone is listening to you?
- How can you tell if someone is not listening to you?
- When is it easy to listen? When is it difficult to listen?
- What can distract you when you are trying to listen?

SCRIPTURE (20 minutes)

Nehemiah 8:1-8

All the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel.

Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month.

He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand.

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places.

So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

- Underline the key verbs (action words) in the above passage

Leader's Notes

Gathered / Brought the law / Hearing / Read / Understand / Stood / Attend / Opened the book / Blessed the Lord / Responded / Lifted / Bowed / Worshipped / Gave the sense

Discussion

- What did Ezra do?
- What did the people do?
- What aspects of this story do we see in church today?

LITURGY (25 minutes)

Read the following -

Proclaiming the Word

The Word of God is proclaimed each time we gather as a community to worship. Readings from the Old and New Testament are chosen and agreed by the church as appropriate for the specific time of year and over a three-year period, most of the Bible is read.

Why Old Testament Readings?

The Old Testament is an ancient collection of different types of writing through which the history of the unfolding relationship between God and the chosen people is told.

As God became known to the people of Israel through their history, worship, their prophets and holy people, God became known to all people through the person of Jesus. We read the Old Testament when we gather to worship because it was the God of Israel that came to us in person in Jesus, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and the prophets. The Old Testament is the historical foundation of our faith.

Why the Psalms?

The psalms allow for the full range of expression of our relationship with God as a community - praise, repentance,

anger, lament, joy, delight, incomprehension, pleading and proclamation. Their language and metaphors are rooted in an age totally different from our own but the human condition remains the same, as does the nature of God.

Why the Epistles?

The early Christian community ‘remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.’ Acts 2:42. As we gather for worship we continue the tradition that began at the heart of the ministry of Jesus. The Epistles proclaim the struggles and history of the early Christians but more importantly give us the teaching of those who were swept up into the ministry of Christ at its inception.

Why the Gospel?

The four Gospels are our primary source of information on the life and ministry of Jesus. In them, we hear the words of Jesus, his call, message of the Kingdom, his storytelling and challenge, his betrayal, death and resurrection. The gospels are the key to our faith as Christians.

Discussion

- What did you learn from the above paragraphs?
- Why do people stand for the gospel?
- Should the gospel be treated differently from the other readings? Why?

The Sermon

Write six words that bring a sermon to life for you.

S _____

E _____

R _____

M _____

O _____

N _____

The Creed

Leader's Notes

There is enough theology in any of the creeds to fill an entire parish education programme in itself. Suffice it to say at this stage that the Nicene Creed (381 AD) used in the Holy Communion service is a record of the church's shared understanding of the Trinity and the Church. Each line was hewn from controversy and theological crisis and reflects the early church's struggles to come to an agreed understanding of faith.

The Creed is our response to the Proclamation of the Word in the reading of scripture and in the teaching of the sermon.

- Divide the group in half and read the Creed by alternate lines

- Each member of the group could pick out a line that either
 - a) explains a belief well to them or
 - b) is confusing

WORSHIP (15 minutes)

- ❖ Place an open Bible in the middle of the group
- ❖ Read the gospel from the following Sunday
- ❖ Take 5 minutes prayer and private reading of the text
- ❖ Each participant who so wishes, shares one thought or prayer without explanation on the reading
- ❖ *Bible Sunday Collect p. 297, or last Collect of Evening Prayer pp.115*
- ❖ The Grace

AT HOME

During the coming week, commit yourself to 10-15 minutes in quiet prayer each day.

Read a psalm a day from Psalms 8-14 in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Write the verse or verses that strike you meaningfully from each psalm.

3. THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Book of Common Prayer p. 206

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this session are to -

- 1. foster an expectation that God listens to our prayer**
- 2. help participants to think about how to bring the needs of the world and the needs of others into the heart of our worship**
- 3. enable participants to find ways in which the Prayers of the People can be expressed more effectively in worship**

MATERIALS

- ✓ *A Book of Common Prayer* for each person
- ✓ Handbook for each person
- ✓ National newspaper
- ✓ Local newspaper
- ✓ Church newspaper
- ✓ Local community newsletter
- ✓ Sheets of paper
- ✓ Cross

EXPERIENCE (20 minutes)

The following questions can be answered individually or in pairs. (10 minutes):

- What are your earliest memories of praying?
- Have there been particular times in your life when prayer took on a more powerful meaning or a greater intensity?
- Where and when do you pray?
- Do you pray with another person on a daily or regular basis? How is this different from when you pray on your own?
- Why do you pray?

Discussion (10 minutes)

- Would anyone like to share anything from what you have written or spoken?

SCRIPTURE (15 minutes)

Read the following references from Luke's gospel, telling us something of the prayer of Jesus.

- What can be learned about prayer from each reference?

But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray. 12:15-16

"But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 6:27-28

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. 11:1-2

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. 18:1

In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial." 22:44-46

Discussion

- What was Jesus' teaching about prayer?

LITURGY (30 minutes)

Leader's Notes

In the Proclaiming and Receiving of the Word, we have heard of God's deep engagement with us throughout history and of the offer of grace and hope given in every age.

We come before God in our need because people of faith have done so and found hope and strength for millennia. We bring the immediate and everyday into the wider context of God's eternal power and love.

In the service we are at the point when the transforming grace of God will make the ordinary holy in Holy Communion. Thus in intercessory prayer we join with the prayer of Christ for the world.

The *Prayers of the People* normally follow the structure of prayer for -

- the universal Church of God
- the nations of the world
- the local community
- those in need
- and remembrance of the dead.

Divide into five groups, each taking a section and writing a prayer. As a resource, each group is given a

- ✓ National newspaper or
- ✓ Local newspaper or
- ✓ Church newspaper or

✓ Local community newsletter.

- Identify three or four different needs from these newspapers, composing a prayer in the following format -
Lord, we pray for (and with) ... Lord in your mercy...

For example: We pray for and with the housebound in our parish....

WORSHIP (10 minutes)

- ❖ The prayers written by each group are read
- ❖ Each is placed onto a cross
- ❖ This cross will be brought to church the following Sunday and the prayers themselves could be used in worship on Sunday
- ❖ The Lord's Prayer
- ❖ The Prayer of Humble Access, p. 207
- ❖ The Grace

AT HOME

During the coming week, commit yourself to 10-15 minutes in quiet prayer each day.

Read a psalm a day from Psalms 15-21 in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Write the verse or verses that strike you meaningfully from each psalm.

4. CELEBRATING AT THE LORD'S TABLE

Book of Common Prayer pp. 208-219

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this session are to -

1. foster an expectation that Christ will meet us as we are in Holy Communion
2. open our lives afresh to the transforming grace of Holy Communion

MATERIALS

- ✓ *A Book of Common Prayer* for each person
- ✓ Handbook for each person
- ✓ Loaf of bread
- ✓ Bottle of red wine

EXPERIENCE (10 minutes)

Discussion

- When has God been very close to you in your life?
- What do you expect when you go to Holy Communion?

- What's the most important part of the service for you?

Leader's Notes

Concentrate on raising expectations with regard to the giving of grace. Examples: fresh start, sense of God's care and presence, forgiveness, direction, healing, hope, peace of mind, welcome etc.

SCRIPTURE (30 minutes)

Luke 24:1-35

On that same day, two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' Jesus asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of

angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see Jesus.'

Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Jesus; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Discussion

Identify the different stages of this story -

- When did they recognise Jesus?
- What did they recognise in him?

- Why did their hearts burn when he walked with them and explained the scriptures?
- If you had been Simon or his companion, what would you have told the others in Jerusalem who had witnessed his crucifixion?

Leader's Notes

Focus the discussion on the following points -

- 1 God journeys with us in Christ.
- 2 We journey together sharing our stories of faith with each other and remembering together God's gracious action in the past.
- 3 Christ was and is recognised in the breaking of the bread. This recognition is of him as the fulfilment of the teaching of the prophets and the very self-revelation of God.
- 4 The table fellowship of Christ was radically inclusive; he gave the ordinary meal a totally new meaning, one where in the meeting with him we enter into a new communion with each other and with God.
- 5 We, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus must leave the comfort of that point of recognition and spread the word. Our faith is not about personal comfort in the recognition of the Lord but in the commission to go and tell others.

LITURGY (30 minutes)

1. Preparation

Read the Prayers of Preparation on p. 208.

One person reads *Thanksgiving Prayer 1*, pp.209-11

Discussion

- What images come to mind as you listen to it?
- What lines strike you?
- For what are we giving thanks?
- What is changed? How?

Leader's Notes

Note that the grace of God transforms not just the bread, but crucially the people who are called into communion, and also the very mission of that community.

2. *Breaking of the Bread*

Read *The Breaking of the Bread* on p. 218

The bread is broken as a symbol of our unity in Christ.

- What does it mean to be one body?
- What are the implications for a congregation that shares in Holy Communion together?

3. *Communion*

- Look at the three invitations on p.219
- Which one is most meaningful for you?
- What do you do before, during and after receiving Holy Communion?
- To what are you saying 'Amen'?

WORSHIP (10 minutes)

- ❖ A loaf of bread and bottle of wine are placed on a table
- ❖ The group sits in silence and reflects on what they have read and discussed over the evening. In the Holy Communion service the Great Silence is when we reflect on how God has met us in the bread and wine
- ❖ Reading of George Herbert's (1593-1633) poem 'Love'

*Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd anything.*

*'A guest,' I answer'd, 'worthy to be here:'
Love said, 'You shall be he.'
'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on Thee.'
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
'Who made the eyes but I?'*

*'Truth, Lord; but I have marr'd them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.'*

'And know you not,' says Love, 'Who bore the blame?'

'My dear, then I will serve.'

'You must sit down,' says Love, 'and taste my meat.'

So I did sit and eat.

AT HOME

During the coming week, commit yourself to 10-15 minutes in quiet prayer each day.

Read a psalm a day from Psalms 22-28 in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Write the verse or verses that strike you meaningfully from each psalm.

5. THE GOING OUT AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Book of Common Prayer pp. 220-1

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this session are to -

1. foster an understanding that we go out transformed afresh as God's people
2. enable participants to understand the connection between worship in church and how they live the rest of their lives

MATERIALS

- ✓ A *Book of Common Prayer* for each person
- ✓ Handbook for each person
- ✓ Candle for the worship time

EXPERIENCE (10 minutes)

Discussion

- What is it like when you come out of a match, or cinema, or party, or pub, concert?
(Leader: look for a range of emotions.)
- How do you feel when you go out of the church at the end of a service?

SCRIPTURE (30 minutes)

James 2:14-26

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you?

If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe--and shudder.

Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works.

Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road?

For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

Discussion

- What connection does James see between worship and life?
- What connection do you see between worship and life?
- What connection does your church see between worship and life?
- 'The worship is over the service begins'. What do you think?

LITURGY (20 minutes)

Prayer after Communion

All:

**Father of all, we give you thanks and praise,
that when we were still far off
you met us in your Son and brought us home.
Dying and living, he declared your love,
gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.
May we who share Christ's body live his risen life;
we who drink his cup bring life to others;
we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.
Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us,
so we and all your children shall be free,
and the whole earth live to praise your name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Discussion

- In what way are we reflecting back to what God has done in our lives and now going forward?

Post Communion Prayers, pp. 241-302

- Each participant is given 5 minutes to read some of the Post Communion Prayers in this section and is invited to select and read out one of his or her own choice
- Explain how the prayer you have chosen both looks back and sends forward

Dismissal:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
in the name of Christ. Amen.

- How can you put the words of this command into practice in your life?
- What challenges face us in making our faith real in our lives as individuals and as a community?
- From where do we get strength?
- If we have worshipped in spirit and in truth and entered into a holy communion with God and with each other, what effect should that have on our lives?

WORSHIP (15 minutes)

- ❖ Light candle
- ❖ Read together the *Prayer after Communion*, p.220
- ❖ Silent prayer

- ❖ Each person will finish the following sentence as a prayer of thanksgiving: God has blessed me....
- ❖ Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

AT HOME

During the coming week, commit yourself to 10-15 minutes in quiet prayer each day.

Read a psalm a day from Psalms 29-35 in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Write the verse or verses that strike you meaningfully from each psalm.

PREPARING TO CELEBRATE COMMUNION

In the week before the final meeting of the group to celebrate Holy Communion together, it is suggested that people meet with each other and the celebrant to prepare the venue, hymns, readings, and prayers for the celebration.

The sermon may take the form of a shared reflection upon the experience of the participants during their time together.

The cup and bread can be passed from one member of the group to the other.

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