



Worship outlines

H2

'Our Christian calling'

Purpose:

To explore how we can witness to our faith in the workplace.

Bible passages

Isaiah 6:1-8, Psalm 138; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Luke 5:1-11 (from Year C, 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

Preparation

Gather together visual prompts for a number of occupations [eg scissors and comb (hairdresser); calculator (accountant); toy taxi; school books (teacher); thermometer (nurse)].

Content

Read the Luke passage and talk about what the disciples did for a living – they were called to follow Christ and, in their case, to change their occupations in order to do so. However, our calling may be to witness to our faith where we work.

Look at the prompts (see above). If children are present get them to guess the occupations concerned from the items you show to the congregation.

Talk about how we are called to witness to our faith through whatever kind of work we do – in the workplace, through voluntary work, in the home or at school. In our work, as Christians, we are called to be honest, to care, to listen attentively to others and to be people of integrity.

People in the congregation can then be invited to speak briefly about how they witness to their faith at work. (If possible 'prime' a few people involved in some of the occupations already discussed to speak briefly about how they witness to their faith at work through what they say and, perhaps more importantly, through what they do and how they do it.)

Sermon

If there is time, use other readings to explore what our Christian calling is all about.

Do we have to leave our jobs when we feel we are called? (Note that Paul continued to be a tent maker)? Do we have to be 'special' to be called? Does 'vocation' only apply to being called to the ordained ministry or the so-called 'caring professions'? What might help us to express our calling more effectively through our work? How can we further the coming of the kingdom of God in the workplace? Is calling a once-and-for-all happening, or might its focus and nature change over time?

Hymns

Behold the servant of the Lord (H&P, SoF); *Forth in thy name, O Lord I go* (H&P, MPC); *Give me the faith what can remove* (H&P, MPC); *Teach me, my God and King* (H&P); *Will you come and follow me* (Iona, SoF)

'God as midwife'

Purpose

To examine a different and seminal image of God.

To affirm those who work in the National Health Service.

(This theme can be linked to the service in Advent when we hear the story of Mary and her conception, or to a Christmas day service when we celebrate the birth of Jesus.)

Bible passages

Isaiah 66:9-13; Psalm 139:1-18; Romans 8:18-25; Luke 1:39-58 or 2:1-7

Content

Invite a midwife (or alternatively a nurse who works on a neo-natal ward) to come to the service and talk about their role in delivering a baby. Discuss the joy, and sometimes the sorrow, involved in this task. Discuss the fact that the pain involved is usually soon overtaken by the joy of a new life come into the world. Interview the midwife about their role. What are the stresses and strains of the job? Are they ever left feeling helpless about a situation? How do they feel about being a part of this creative process? And, if they are Christians, how does their faith and work come together in this situation?

Prayers Pray for all those who work in the health service, often experiencing stresses and strains, and sometimes feeling helpless. Give thanks for their joy in working with God to help bring new life, health and wholeness.

Sermon (1 – Luke 1:39-58) We are used to male images of God. Are we comfortable with one that is usually associated with women? Does the image of God as midwife mean that the process of creation brings God similar emotions to those associated with that role? Does God sometimes feel helpless when faced with the way we misuse the gift of free will? What does Paul mean when he talks about creation groaning in labour pains until now? What does this say about suffering and hope? How can we sing the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) when these promises are not fulfilled – or are they?
(2 – Luke 2:1-7) How did Mary feel giving birth in a stable? Who helped her and how might they have felt? What is the significance of there being pain at the beginning *and* end of her son's life? Reflect on the fact that it is often in the workplace where we share the process of creation with God. Is this why work often brings with it a wide range of emotions? How can knowing that God shares these feelings enrich our daily lives?

Hymns

Almighty Father, by whom all change is wrought (H&P); *Almighty Father, who dost give* (H&P); *Christ is the world's true light* (H&P); *Praise to the Lord* (H&P, MPC, SoF); *The angel Gabriel* (H&P); *Who fathoms the eternal thought* (H&P)

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