

A String of Pearls

Introduction

These sourcesheets go alongside the weekly talksheets in a series of studies in church worship. As this portion of Romans suggests, our worship is a means by which we can be 'transformed'.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12: 1-2

In following these materials, you will find opportunities to reflect on worship, share your own feelings and understandings and see more clearly how worship might be more transformative for us as individuals and as a church.

These sessions are an opportunity to explore our worship. The word worship (which goes back to Old English) means essentially 'to give worth' or perhaps 'worthship'. This is neatly illustrated in these lines from the Psalms:

*Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name;
worship the Lord in holy splendour.
Psalm 29:2*

However, this is not something that happens automatically nor is it something that just requires our agreement. Worship is something that we have to do.

In the Anglican Church, worship commonly occurs in services which have a particular order or shape often referred to as liturgy. In these sessions we are going to look at the Communion Service as an example of liturgical worship – you may wish to think about other forms of worship such as Evensong or the Contemporary Service as you go along.

It is worth pondering on the word liturgy too as it gives us a clue as to the nature of worship. Liturgy is not Old English but Greek and might be rendered 'the work of the people'. So a way to think about liturgy is to consider it the work that we do when we worship.

While we will refer to worship in the Bible from time to time, our modern worship has evolved through a long period of development and transformation. What this series of reflections primarily focusses on is our modern form(s) of worship.

Some have wondered why worship is important at all, saying 'I can be a Christian without going to church'. This may be true but these words might make us think.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another

Hebrew 10.24-25

Being part of worship mirrors the way in which we see faith in action in the gospels (Luke 10: 1-10). The words of this prayer are a catalyst to this faith-in-action, some have called this working out of faith in the world 'praxis' - how we might practically address such issues as racism, poverty, slavery and oppression. It is good practice to ask ourselves how our praxis has grown through worship.

So, we are ready to begin. Our series will take us through the following stages:

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| 1. | Arrivals | Gathering and Greeting |
| 2. | Confession | Confession, Absolution |
| 3. | The Bible | Readings, Sermon |
| 4. | Prayer and Intercession | Collect, Intercessions |
| 5. | Praise | Gloria, Hymns |
| 6. | Giving thanks & remembering | Eucharist, Lord's Prayer |
| 7. | The Personal Touch | Personal prayer, stillness |
| 8. | Sending out | Blessing and dismissal |

Each stage has a Sourcesheet and a Talksheet. In preparation for each week's homegroup session you should read through the Sourcesheet, you might like to look at the Talksheet too to get familiar with the questions.

Each Talksheet also acts as a guide for each session. Leaders should familiarise themselves with both sheets before the session.

Each session opens with a reflection on Psalm 100 which is intended as an ice-breaker - a chance for participants to share their thoughts on some specific aspect of worship or faith.

Enjoy!