

Unit 8 Assignment

Praising God



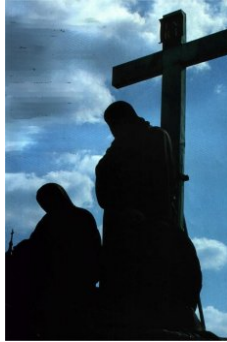
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Assignment Unit 8 Praising God

Plan an act of worship, where you share the leadership with others, and at which all ages are present.

Plan an act of worship for one of the major festivals of the Christian year.

1 State the theme of the service. Explain how the service is planned to unfold.



Service for Easter Sunday Evening 6:30pm 20th April 2003

Although not designated a Family Service, because of local knowledge, the holiday period and other factors, the service was planned with an 'all age' congregation in mind.

The theme of the service was walking with Jesus, and taken from the lectionary, because it was the evening service following an Easter Sunday morning celebration. The reading from Luke's gospel 24:13-35 is the story of two disciples on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

This is a very fitting scripture as it not only continues the good news story of the resurrection of Christ but also re-caps the entire ministry of Jesus for those who may not have heard it in context. The story is emotionally evocative and especially easy for people to relate to the emotions of the disciples on the road. They act in a manner that most ordinary people would act, from the reasons for them being on the road, the reason they fail to recognise Jesus at first, the reaction to someone apparently unaware of the recent events and then so knowledgeable about the scriptures concerning those events, to the point of recognition at the table.

Because of this potential for empathy with the disciples it was decided to use the dramatised version of the scripture and have it 'acted out' by several characters. It was also planned to be very early in the order of service, the intention here was that all of the rest of the service could be linked back to the scripture in some way and right from the outset what happened to the disciples on the road to Emmaus would be the focus of everyone's concentration.

The other crucial element of the service was that rather than a sermon a worship leader would give their testimony followed by a short time in small groups for people to share their own experiences of God with each other.

2 Write an order of service. Explain how the service is structured and give your reasons for the order of the elements in the service

The service was planned as a local arrangement by five of the church's worship leaders and steered by myself as a local preacher. At the planning meeting emphasis was put on involvement by both the worship leaders and the congregation. Much thought was put into the consideration of using visual as well as the oral and that items were suitable for a wide variety of ages and worship styles this included the use of the worship band as well as the organ.

An added interest for the service was that the pews had been organised into the 'round' though as we expect less than half of the available seating to be occupied we created a 'front' albeit along the length of the worship area rather than the width.

Order of service

Trinity 6:30pm service Easter Sunday 20th April 2003

Welcome and Call to worship: *Worship Leader Nigel*

The congregation were warmly welcomed to the service and informed that the service would follow the order on their service sheets and that the service would naturally flow without announcement from one item to the next. This was because the entire worship area was arranged different to normal and there may have been people unaware of the change. Not only were the pews rearranged but that necessitates movement of the altar table, the lectern and the overhead projector screen. To the side, where the raised front normally is, the worship band was situated.

It was felt important to alleviate any worries people might have about the somewhat different surroundings.

The call to worship spoke briefly of the excitement of Easter Sunday morning and the empty tomb and concluded with the shout "Christ is risen" with the response "He is risen indeed".

Hymn: *This joyful Eastertide H&P 213 Organ*

A worship Leader, Nigel, introduced this stirring Pratt Green hymn underlining and proclaiming that the season of Easter is all about Christ's resurrection and not just about His death. It has only 3 verses though the chorus is easy to learn for those unfamiliar to it.

NT Reading: *Luke 24:13-35 Worship Leaders*

Worship Leaders Liz, Bobby, Margaret, Dot & Colin performed the dramatised reading with the 3 main characters at the Lectern, a narrator in the centre and an Old Testament scripture reader off to the far side. By using the dramatised version people could quickly identify with the characters and empathise with their positions. By the use of the different voices the reading became alive and real so the story was easier to absorb, simpler to understand and would last longer in the memory. Although it was read there was sufficient emotion and intonation in the voices for that not to be

noticed. There was also an amount of movement of the disciples and Jesus during the narration to maintain some visual interest.

Purposefully the reading was not introduced and there was no break or introduction before the next item so as to maintain the train of thought.

Meditation: Taize chant Surrexit Christus *Worship Leader Dot*

Dot chose the chant and coordinated this item. The intention was to allow the dramatised reading to dwell in the mind and to sink deeper as the realisation of what happened and what it all means occurs. The worship band began the music quietly and gently before starting to sing the simple phrase repeatedly. The words were printed on the service sheet and could be learnt easily after two or three repeats.

At the same time a series of images of the Easter story appeared on the overhead projector screen. As the service started at 6:30pm there was no need for extra lighting, by this time it was just beginning to get darker and the effect of the darkening room and the vivid images was quite moving. There was no planned time to finish this item and so it continued until it appeared to run its course and people were ready to move on.

Prayers: Thanksgiving, Confession and assurance of forgiveness **The Lord's Prayer** *Worship Leader Bobby*

With people in a meditative and prayerful attitude worship leader Bobby started the prayers as the music fell silent. He had written prayers using the Methodist worship book, Living Stones material and his own words.

Following the assurance of our forgiveness by the free grace of God the Lord's prayer was shared, the congregation noticeably prayed many different versions.

Hymns: Lord I lift your name on high **He has risen** *AD2000 Praise and worship band*

The response to God's word starts in praise. We sing to God to show how we feel towards Him and then to reiterate the glorious miracle of Easter.

Testimony: *Worship Leader Dot*

Dot bravely shared her experience of God's comfort and power through a particularly harrowing episode of depression. The reality of Jesus' presence to the disciples on the road to Emmaus is paralleled by the very real experience of a member of the congregation.

In groups *Worship Leader Nigel*

Nigel encouraged people to turn to groups of three or four and share in love their experiences of God in their lives. Again, this item had no real time constraint and people were left in fellowship with each other and God until it seemed time to move on.

Offering of ourselves and our gifts *Local Preacher Rob*

The Sunday evening collection is taken for those who haven't attended another service that day and don't give via their bank by a basket at the door on entry. This is brought forward to the alter table and blessed along with ourselves and our talents and gifts as living sacrifices for God's service.

Hymn: Thine be the glory *H&P 212 Organ*

This was introduced by Rob as the final, and send forth, hymn.

Blessing and sharing the grace *Local Preacher Rob*

God's love and power is requested as we go back into the world at the start of another week. We pray for His Spirit to guide and strengthen us in the coming days.

In conclusion the grace was shared between us.

3 Describe and assess three ways in which individuals could contribute different approaches to the service's theme.

The Dramatised reading

Stories from scripture are drama and suit being presented as such with great effect. This particular scripture, The road to Emmaus, was intended to both set the scene and to be remembered and considered throughout the service. There was no requirement to introduce the item as the piece was narrated such that all was adequately explained. The worship area had been arranged 'in the round' though it had been set to use one half of the circle only. The scene was set with the narrator at the front and centre position as would be a leader of worship. Off to the far right, in the pulpit, was the character reading the scripture excerpts, the two disciples walked in from the left closely followed by the character of Jesus. The three took up a position to the left of centre in front of a small lectern. All the participants were now in front of microphones and would be heard well by all.

There is little movement during the dialogue but focus is switched from narrator to characters to scripture reader and back. There is also plenty of gesticulation from the disciples to stop it from becoming too 'flat'. The use of different voices also added to the 'colour' of the piece so as to give interest and depth for anyone just listening.

There was a distinct end as the character of Jesus silently walks off to the narration of His disappearance. The congregation were left in silence to ponder the relevance and meaning of what they had just seen and heard. Those present were able to find themselves in sympathy with the disciples and to gain a very real sense of what it must have been like on that road.

The silence was allowed to continue for some time before the next item.

The meditation

As the congregation were contemplating the Emmaus road and Easter story the silence was broken gently by a single, tinkling guitar. This was built on in breadth and volume before voices began the Taize chant Surrexit Christus. Although the words were printed on the service sheet there was no instruction or obligation to join in. Simultaneously a series of images were projected onto the screen depicting the Easter story from the solemnity of Good Friday through to celebration of Easter Sunday Morning.

The intention was to allow space and time for the immensity of what happened to fall onto the congregation, for people who had questions to ask them directly of God. There was sufficient sound to cover possible embarrassment of people's own voices whether they were in prayer or singing along. The Latin lyrics helped to move the concentration from the song itself to its use as personal worship. Those who sang along were as comfortable doing so as those who chose let it all wash over them.

Testimony

Before the Testimony the mood of the service had been changed to a more boisterous and energetic session of praise.

So often we use Bible stories to illustrate the ways that God can transform the lives of people and congregations may be forgiven should they start to believe that it only ever happened in

the past. The use of personal testimony bring the work of God to the here and now and in people we know and love within our own church community.

A worship Leader and band member recounted a period lately when they had suffered a particularly severe and lengthy instance of depression. Even though those around her were loving and kind and medical staff sympathetic and helpful there appeared to be no way past her feelings. It was only when she gave her condition to God and prayed for release that she started to feel better.

The testimony was presented in a relaxed, chatty way that avoided it sounding too prepared or false. It demonstrated to those present that, even right now, we find God at work in our congregation.

4 Choose two Bible passages and appropriate hymns. Briefly say why you have chosen each of them for this service.

NT Reading: Luke 24:13-35

This passage is ideal for the evening of Easter Sunday for three main reasons; firstly the story retells the events of the Easter story v19-24 to re-state and affirm the messages of the morning celebration. Secondly, it links Jesus with the Old Testament prophecies v27 and highlights the continuity between the old and the new testaments. Thirdly it illustrates how the risen Christ conquers death and can walk with us in our lives v15, if we recognise him as our Saviour v31.

OT Reading: Psalm 32:1-5

Although not actually chosen for this particular service the start of this Psalm would make a good call to worship to help set ourselves right with God as David did knowing the grace and mercy of our forgiving God who, by the sacrifice of His only Son brought life for us all.

Hymn: This joyful Eastertide

This rousing Pratt Green hymn reflects the message of Easter and Christ's resurrection, a joyous celebration of the good news of this season.

Hymn: Lord I lift your name on high

This hymn of praise emphasises our love and desire to put Jesus first in our lives while reiterating the gospel's Easter message.

Hymn: He has risen

The Easter story retold with the reasons why God should do this great thing for us with a chorus that proclaims Jesus' power over death.

Hymn: Thine be the glory

Sung out from the very souls of God's people this classic hymn affirms all we believe of the climax of the gospel story and sends us forth into the world renewed and excited by our living God.

5 Write a prayer of confession including an assurance of forgiveness.

Prayer of confession

Almighty and merciful God, we live in the certainty that all Your promises are fulfilled and the knowledge that, by Your overwhelming grace, the debt of our sin has been paid by the sacrifice of Your Son Jesus, The Christ.
Our sins are truly forgiven.

In the certainty of this truth we pray:

God who notices, you see when nobody else realises we are missing.

When we creep away from what we should be doing,

or wander far from those who need us,

You see, with eyes that love even when we make you weep.

You see, with a heart that loves even when we break it.

We are sorry that we make you anxious as our parent.

Not like Jesus, who was found sitting, listening and learning.

More often you find us sitting grumbling, or arguing, fighting or daydreaming,
wasteful and worrying.

Forgive us and bring us back into Your light.

Silence

We are free, to sit at Your feet.

We are free, to learn from Your word.

We are free, from all that has burdened us.

Amen