

Short act of Worship

all are welcome

AIM

This is a short act of worship on the theme 'All are welcome'. It is suitable for a small group or an informal time of worship for a larger group.

INTRODUCTION

We all like to think of our churches or groups as welcoming. But to be truly welcoming is a challenge. This short act of worship provides a space to consider some of these challenges through reading the bible together, praying and worshipping together.

STRUCTURE

Hymn: As we are gathered, Jesus is here (Rejoice and Sing 469)

Prayer

Thanks be to God, merciful and eternal. You call us by name and lead us in your way. You know all that we are, and you still love us.

Thanks be to God, merciful and eternal. You gather us, friends and strangers drawn together in our difference, called, through the Spirit's power, your people.

Thanks be to God. As we gather, you will feed us. When we leave this place, you will be with us. When we recall your words, you will sustain us.

Thanks be to God, merciful and eternal. Amen.

[From 'Gathered to the heart of God' and is by Anne Sardeson entitled 'Thanks be to God, for everlasting mercy']

Sing or read verse 1 of Hymn 107 Rejoice and Sing:

The love of God comes close where stands an open door,
to let the stranger in, to mingle rich and poor.
The love of God is here to stay; embracing those who walk his way,
the love of God is here to stay.

Bible readings: Genesis 18: 1 - 8 & 16. Hebrews 13: 1 & 2

Sing or read verse 2 of Hymn 107 Rejoice and Sing:

The peace of God comes close to those caught in the storm,
forgoing lives of ease to ease the lives forlorn.
The peace of God is here to stay; embracing those who walk his way,
the peace of God is here to stay.

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Poem: 'All are welcome'

*He sits on my doorstep, I open my door,
eyes that are sad, looked up, all forlorn.
'I'm wet and bedraggled, I'm tired and unfed
will you welcome me, take me in and give me a bed'.
I push the door to close it but hesitate and pray,
'help me Lord, Oh! help me, to welcome all who come my way'.*

*She comes to my window and peers inside,
'are you going to leave me out here', she cries,
'I'm tired and hungry, I've nothing to wear,
will you welcome me OR just stand and stare'.
I start to close the curtains but hesitate and pray,
'help me Lord, Oh! help me, to welcome all who come my way'.*

*I opened my door and the callers came in,
I did not notice their colour of skin,
one was all bent, the other so thin,
I was the fortunate one, safe and sound,
nothing to worry me, my feet on the ground.
Again I hesitated and a voice spoke to me,
'you do not know their country, you do not know their creed
you only have to look at them to realise they have a NEED'.*

*So I shut the door firmly, stood there a while,
then THANKED THE LORD, opened my arms and gave each a smile.
It does not matter what colour, creed or race –
ALL ARE WELCOME, ALL ARE WELCOME IN THIS PLACE.*

Sing or read verse 3 of Hymn 107 Rejoice and Sing:

The joy of God comes close where faith encounters fears,
where heights and depths of life are found through smiles and tears.
The joy of God is here to stay; embracing those who walk his way,
the joy of God is here to stay.

Reflection + prayer based on Genesis 18: 1 - 8 & 16

Abraham was sitting resting when those strangers approached. He could have stayed where he was - after all he was old and it was very hot.

God our Father, forgive us that so often we ignore those whom we regard as strangers, or perhaps we just given them a cursory nod and pass by without slackening our pace. Open

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our eyes, our minds, our hearts to welcome them as You would have us do - to go out of our way to meet and greet them in Your name.

Abraham invited the strangers to rest in the shade and take some refreshment. He made no demands on them - just sought to provide a welcome and meet the needs of weary travellers.

God our Father, forgive us that so often we do not invite and welcome people to simply pause and stop here, because we are not aware of their need of refreshment, of rest and most of all their need of You. Give us the courage and patience to go to where they are and to stay by them.

Abraham placed himself and his household at the service of the strangers. A frenzy of preparation, baking and butchering took place in the heat of the day.

God our Father, forgive us that so often we put ourselves first and the needs of others second. Help us to offer an unstinting welcome and practical service in Your name.

As they departed, Abraham accompanied the strangers for a while to see them safely on their way.

God, as we seek to be followers, travelling the way that Jesus leads, give us the grace and sensitivity to walk alongside others on their journeys - seeing them as friends, no longer strangers.

Sing or read verse 4 of Hymn 107 Rejoice and Sing:

The grace of God comes close to those whose grace is spent,
when hearts are tired or sore and hope is bruised and bent.
The grace of God is here to stay; embracing those who walk his way'
The grace of God is here to stay.

Let us share the GRACE together.

EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more material for evangelism year please revisit the website.

Acknowledgements

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HOW TO FEEDBACK TO VISION4LIFE?

If you wish to offer any feedback – brickbats and bouquets are equally welcome! – you can do so in various ways.

You can email the Vision4Life steering group and the coordinator about general issues via the website or at admin@vision4life.org.uk

Website issues can be dealt with through web@vision4life.org.uk

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:
Year 3 – Transformed for Evangelism: evangelism@vision4life.org.uk