

Value Tradition:

- Don't go mad on new songs... Beginning and ending worship with a really good "big" hymn will keep the traditionalists happy (and there's none so conservative as an 8-year-old!) ... and make sure everyone leaves feeling joyful. Too much new stuff will simply alienate them.
- Celebrate the heritage of your church. It's something all ages can be proud of! Make opportunities to thank God for its saints, its history, its local community and environment – "do" Yorkshire Day; beat the bounds; mark lammastide and harvest alongside your industrial heritage...

People:

- Preparation, preparation, preparation!!!
- Don't forget, you'll need to ask folk in advance if you want to have a good mix of Bible readers; any new songs; actors for sketches or mimes; people to write out or read prayers.
- There's nothing worse than a poorly prepared sketch or song – don't leave rehearsals to the last minute!! (and if you're working with uniformed organisations, make sure the leaders know in time to programme rehearsal time in.)
- Try to involve as wide a range of folk as possible – men and women, old and young, shy and outgoing, "in-crowd" and "out" – the Church is a family, and everyone has a part to play.

Some guidelines for planning All-Age Worship

by Revd Clare MacLaren

All-Age Worship must be exactly what it says:

- *not worship for children with adults present*
- *not worship for adults with children present but worship which endeavours to engage the body, mind and soul of all ages...*

Context:

Before you start to plan, be aware of:

- the potential and the drawbacks of the space you will be worshipping in,
- the numbers of people who will be present,
- the likely balance of age and gender.

Bearing these in mind:

- Will it be possible to include:
 - movement?
 - different media?
 - a range of musical styles?
 - interactive elements?
- Will there be people present who:
 - cannot read?
 - have special needs (e.g. visual impairment, hearing difficulties, mobility difficulties)?
 - are not used to being in church?

Theme:

- Whatever you do, pray it through! The Holy Spirit will nudge you in the right direction, and bring it all together on the day!
- The secret is to keep it simple – pick one message or theme for the service and stick to that. If you can't sum up the theme clearly in a sentence, then you're probably trying to say too much!!
- Once you've decided on the message, then think of a few different ways you can explore it – e.g. a bible story that illustrates the theme; songs that mention it; a sketch about it; a simple bible reading that ties in with it, a game or exercise that would get people to think about it.
- Experience has shown me that the best services are the ones that get everyone involved, but without getting over-fussy or complicated.

Structure:

- Try to keep very clearly to a structure or outline order of service – this will enable adults and children alike to relax into the worship without worrying about what they're supposed to be doing next.
- Don't feel you have to include everything that's in the normal service-books though! If you're an Anglican, negotiate with your incumbent how flexible it's OK to be – see Common Worship (p24 + 25)
- Do include opportunity for thanksgiving (for specific bits of good news and the blessings of the week) ... Somehow, the Church of England has missed this out of its liturgy, except in a very general sense in the Eucharistic prayer!

- Obviously, you can be very flexible within such a structure, and must fit in songs and hymns to suit the theme.
- Avoid people having too many books to juggle. No more than 3 items – a hymn book and order of service for the particular service – with maybe a card for the Eucharistic Prayer that you can re-use to save on paper (unless you have a projector, of course!)
- Keep the layout clear, and the print large... both old and young will thank you for it!

Variety:

- Keep the service moving – lots of small elements (3 min max), especially if many under 7's are present.
- Appeal to the senses. What is there to: Look at? Touch? Hear? Taste? Smell?
- At what points in the service will people have opportunity to:
 - Hear the message?
 - Make connections with their lives?
 - Have space for prayer?
 - Laugh together?
 - Move around?