

# Outdoor Worship and Forest Church Praising God from within Creation

For Forest Church Leaders



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## **About the Authors**

### **Siggy Parratt-Halbert**

Siggy is a trained Forest School Practitioner at Level III. She practised as an Environmental Educator and Forest School Practitioner for several years in a woodland setting, delivering to people drawn from local primary and secondary schools; further education; toddler groups; family centres; centres for people with learning difficulties; young people excluded from school; University of the Third Age; and the general public through workshops and public events. She now works for the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network of The Methodist Church, and applies her Forest School training to the concept of Forest Church and outdoor worship. She is keen to promote outdoor worship as an alternative to the standard church service, providing an opportunity to commune with God within His creation, and to attract those whose spirituality is not engaged by the established church.

### **Kevin Pellatt**

Kevin was 'press-ganged' into school at the age of five. He spent his schooldays looking out of the window longing to be outside. Now having supposedly retired he still longs to be outdoors. He loves trekking and cycling and often just listening to the silence that sometimes falls on the Yorkshire Dales where he lives with Sue. He is a qualified Level III Forest Schools Practitioner and a Worship Leader.

He enjoys photography and picture making, digitally, or with pen, pencil and paintbrush. He has been involved in a number of creative workshops where people are encouraged to explore and express their faith through art.

### **Sue Pellatt**

Sue, in her working life, was a primary classroom teacher and then took on an advisory role for children, 0-11 years, with additional needs. Outside of work she has, amongst other things, led the Sunday school team, which developed its own thematic programme. That led to being part of the team that prepared and led monthly all-age services which were more informal than usual, including practical activities to enhance learning and worship. Since moving to the Dales she has become a Worship Leader. She likes nothing more than to go out of the front door to walk or sit by becks, waterfalls and on top of hills taking time to just 'be' and observe the wonder of the area.



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# Outdoor Worship: Praising God from within Creation

## Introduction.

Beyond the windows and four walls of our church building lies another world, beyond that a solar system, beyond that a galaxy and beyond that a universe. We as Christians believe every single particle of this bears the DNA of the God we worship. What would we learn about our God if we peeped through the window to the creation beyond or even stepped outside and experienced with all our senses the majesty of God?

We have produced two booklets. One contains everything you need to know about Forest Church, along with a collection of 12 services and related activities to encourage you to try one or two, or maybe even more, so that you might capture something extra of our wonderful God by worshipping within creation. The other, smaller booklet, is a stripped down version, designed for you to take out into the field if you need to, and comprises the 12 services only. It assumes you've done all your research, planning and practicing, and acts as an aide memoir while you're out with your church.

Some of the services might seem a bit weird, off the wall, or even un-Christian. The writers of this booklet would like to assure you the content of this booklet has its roots very firmly in the Christian tradition, some of it pre-Whitby Synod, dating to the Celtic way of worship that has become unfamiliar to most of us. The fact that these services are not the typical 'hymn sandwich' does not make them un-Christian or un-Methodist. Rather, they are a different way in which we can move closer to God. And in an age where many of our traditional churches are failing, we need to find varied ways of worship that might appeal to a wider audience.

If you are worshipping with a church, it is helpful to find out first the level of physical ability in terms of inclusivity. The congregation may be of an age where people are infirm or disabled. It may be sensible to arrange to have some folding picnic chairs stashed away ready to bring out as needed. Most of what you find here can be adapted to indoors. While we will give you the basic outline and content, let your own imagination fly and think about how you might adapt these services to your own context. It's fine to go off piste! It will also help you to know how open the church is to trying new things. It's sometimes best you don't share your detailed plans in advance; the church may dismiss them without first trying them, which would deny them the opportunity to explore something new. Think of it as never telling someone what's in a pie – it can be as flavoursome as can be, but when they know what's in it, they won't eat it (try it, it's true!).

If you want to try these ideas with your own church – they're great for Own Arrangements as well as visiting preachers – and if you have no garden, be bold and go to your local open space. No-one will think you're mad (well, they might), but they might be emboldened by their own curiosity to ask questions, or even join in. What a great witness, as well as a great opportunity for making worship exciting and fun.

Some of the services here are season-specific, some are not. We're sure you will find something here that you can do with your church or your community, and all of them will work for all ages. Be brave, be bold, and dare to worship God as The Creator.

## Top Tips

### Sensory

We are encouraged by Jesus to worship the Lord our God with our whole being; in Mark 12:30 in answer to the question 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?' Jesus replies 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength'. This deliberate act of love is a whole body experience involving every bit of our being.

Being outside opens us up to the elements and allows us to use more of our senses to worship our Creator. We can see, smell, hear and touch animals, fish, insects, plants and trees. We can appreciate the effect of the sun and wind on natural features and how creation works together and adapts to the challenges. We can share this wonder with each other, we can share it in quiet moments with our Creator God who loves us; and we can say thank you Lord. The natural world around us may be another way that God reveals Himself to us.



Much of outdoor church is about sharing time together, conversations over an activity, having time to reflect and to grow together. There is space for participants to find their own (equally valuable) learning. Worship is what we do...so how we engage with an activity is worship as much as the words we speak, and the process is just as worshipful as the end result.

### **Context**

Prepare your group beforehand to be outside and to wear suitable clothing - in the case of children, clothes they can ruin; and stout footwear especially if working with heavy items or on uneven ground. Consider waterproof clothing or sun lotion if sunshine might be expected. Know what you want to achieve, how to get there and the alternative routes should you venture off the main road.

Be realistic about your abilities. Confidently capable? Capable? Unwilling or unable to take on what you are about to do? How much do you want to stray outside your comfort zone? What is at stake for you, others and the Christian faith? You may prefer to test ideas before going live... unless you like to live “on the edge”; or can live with something “failing” publicly. If you are doing anything “crafty”, always try it out in advance. It doesn’t provoke confidence in a Leader’s ability if you can’t do what you are asking others to do, or you find something doesn’t work. If you try out a craft or activity at home, you can tweak it to work better for you. You don’t have that option once you are in your setting with your group.

Know the place where you are to be working. What is the potential? What are the limitations? What are the hazards? If you are going to a place you’ve never visited, then plan accordingly and maybe have something tried and tested that will work in any situation. It’s good practice to do a recce a day or two in advance. Your chosen site may have changed since the last time you were there; long term changes such as trees that have been felled, or short term changes because heavy rain has turned it into a quagmire. Make sure you arrive in good time to assess the place before you begin, and to set up.

### **Risk Assessment**

There are lots of things to consider when you’re outdoors:

- Weather: rain can make things slippery, the sun can make things uncomfortable if there is no shelter, and easily overlooked are high winds. Don’t underestimate wind if you are working in a woodland
- Slips, trips and falls, of course. Just be aware of the ground on which you are working. It’s important you have thought about what might be a problem, and that you have contingencies. Is the area disability friendly? Could a wheelchair user access the site?
- Know your group: its capability – mental, physical, spiritual. Are the people you are working with likely to join in or throw a wobbly? Sometimes this is about age and culture, sometimes its about a person’s faith journey. But don’t worry if you find you have one or two detractors – you get these with a hymn sandwich too
- What about group dynamics? If you are working with children are they well behaved? Lively? Docile? What’s their attitude to risk? If their parents are with them, this will have a heavy influence on dynamics. Children are less free in their approach when parents are around, and parents can interfere (‘don’t you think you should...’); take over their activity (‘let me do that’); or even begin laying down rules (‘don’t get dirty’) so think about what you want to achieve. Older groups also have their own group dynamics, so watch how people are behaving, and alter your approach to the group or to individuals as you go along.

There is a risk assessment in the appendices that you can use as a template.

### **Round Up**

A good way to reinforce any learning is to ask participants at the end what they have learnt. There are different approaches dependent on your group and sensitivity is key to success. What was best part? What have you enjoyed? What do you know now that you didn’t before? What have you learnt about



God, others, yourself? It can be in a plenary group, it may be one to one as you move around as the activity progresses, it may be that a few moments are spent individually quietly reflecting on their experience. You’ll need to judge your group to get your approach right. Alternatively, you may just choose to sum up the key messages you wanted to cover in a “talky bit” towards the end of the session.





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## February: Imbolc and Candlemas, and Brigid



St Brigid

*'Spirituality for Today'*

<http://www.spirituality.org/is/187/saint.asp>

### **Section One: Introduction to Brigid**

*Note to Leader: this can be presented to your worshippers, who may not be familiar with Brigid*

Brigid was originally a pagan goddess, representing the three stages of a woman's life – maid, mother, crone. She has been brought into the Christian tradition and intertwined with Saint Brigid who was abbess at Kildare, well known for her generosity and hospitality. The two Brigid's are almost indistinct from one another. The goddess was closely associated with midwifery; the saint was said to have attended Mary at childbirth (the time difference notwithstanding). In the same way that the eastern church embodies Sophia goddess of Wisdom as the feminine part of God, so the Celtic church embraced Brigid goddess of healing and fertility in the same role. Brigid the goddess, Brigid the saint and the Christian faith cannot be easily separated.

Brigid's Saints Day is in February, the month where we celebrate imbolc and Candlemas. Imbolc heralds the beginning of spring. It is the 'quickenning of the year' when we are encouraged to let go of the past and look to the future; where we clear out the old and make space within and without, for the new. It is marked with the cleansing fire. Likewise the saint Brigid is also associated with fire; an eternal fire was kept at her abbey, continually fed with wood by the 20 nuns on a rota without it ever producing ash. On Brigid's death, the remaining 19 nuns kept the fire fed, with the 20<sup>th</sup> night left in Brigid's spirit's care. The fire was always still alight in the morning.

Candlemas celebrates Christ's presentation at the temple. Like imbolc, this feast heralds the new. It is a promise of renewal, the unveiling of hidden potential; hope; new beginnings; and like imbolc, the return of the light. Candlemas is marked with the light of candles; imbolc and Brigid with fire. It is no coincidence that the two festivals and the two Brigid's figure large together and in February.

The moon in February is referred to as the Hunger Moon – the opposite of the moon in September, which is known as the Harvest Moon, a name we are much more familiar with.

Saint Brigid was known primarily for her generosity and hospitality, and her spirit is still called upon today to protect and bless. Her feast day is marked with a festive supper. A seedcake is baked and left outside the door with a sheaf of corn and a piece of white cloth signifying the cloak she wore when travelling. With a nod to the goddess Brigid, the Saint's presence at the beginning of spring is her reassurance to a people once rooted in farming that life has come back to earth after the winter and that she will provide food and protection for the coming year.

Looking through the lens of Brigid, we will celebrate the beginning of spring, the return of the light, and the new promise of hope and renewal brought to us by Christ.

### **Section Two: Good to Know**

*Note to Leader: the plants and symbols below are heavily associated with Brigid the goddess and Saint Brigid. Bear them in mind when planning your worship. Symbolism is a powerful tool for helping people contemplate their faith journey.*

The following plants are associated with Brigid, and can be used in your worship:

- Snowdrops: because they are the first gift of spring. Their whiteness is also representative of purity, and their greenness of new life. Jesus is represented in Revelation as being white, pure after His return to heaven. And of course He promises us new life if we come to Him in faith
- Blackberry: sacred to Brigid, the leaves and berries are used to attract prosperity and healing
- Ginger: revitalises and stimulates the “fire within”, especially after winter. Should we not also have a fire within us for Jesus? Should we not be filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit?
- Coltsfoot: Coltsfoot or “sponnc” (Gaelic) is a herb associated with Brigid. This herb is associated with love and a bringer peace. And Jesus was sent to earth to bring love and peace
- Rowan: a sprig of Rowan can be put near the door of your home, or a sprig worn for protection. Rowan berries have a tiny five-pointed star on the bottom. Perhaps this reminds us of the star that guides us to Christ
- Willow: willow symbolises feminine energy. Its branches are flexible - expressing movement and change rather than resistance. It is a tree of enchantment and dreaming, enhancing the confidence to follow one's intuition, and inspires leaps of imagination. Perhaps our faith should also be enchanted, perhaps we should “dream dreams”, perhaps we too should be confident in showing and sharing our faith.

The following symbols are associated with Brigid and can be used in your worship:

- The swan: the swan mates for life and represents loyalty, fidelity and faithfulness. Jesus was so loyal to His Father He went to the cross. He asks for our faithfulness in return for His
- The flame: imbolc is a fire festival and fire of all kinds is associated with Brigid. Candlemas too, is a festival associated with fire and light. In the traditional Christian celebration this is marked with candles, hence the name
- Brigid's Cross: this is a traditional symbol, found at the hearths of homes throughout Ireland and beyond as a symbol of protection. The cross is a powerful image for Christians. It's not hard to draw parallels between Brigid's Cross and that of Jesus
- The serpent: in Celtic mythology Brigid was associated with an awakening hibernating serpent which emerged from its lair at imbolc. Traditionally serpents were associated with creativity and inspiration; they reawaken with the beginning of spring. They didn't necessarily have the darker association serpents have had since Adam and Eve
- Sheep: Brigid's festival is at the beginning of lambing. We are all familiar with the many stories in the Bible around sheep and lambs. The lamb is a potent image for followers of Christ also
- The colours white and silver: representing purity
- The colour green: representing new life, in the same way Jesus gives His followers new life in Him.

### **Section Three: Related Activities**

*Note to the Leader: The following activities included here are best outdoors, but can be done indoors if people are unable to be outside. Don't try to cram them all in to one service; rather you should “pick and mix” according to your audience. Some you will need to resource in advance, so give yourself some time to prepare.*

#### Activity One: Create and Decorate an Altar.

To celebrate Brigid; the birth of the new spring; Candlemas and the recognition that the Light of the World Jesus Christ is with us.

In advance of the worship, collect a selection of related plants and symbols listed in the “Good to Know” section:

- Please don't dig up snowdrops growing in the wild. You can buy them from garden centres in pots
- Blackberry plants are a bit prickly and the berries aren't available in February, so you might want to use pictures instead
- For the ginger, use ginger root
- Rowan often still has berries in February if they haven't all been eaten by the birds. Again, use pictures if you're stuck. Try to find pictures of the berries that show the five pointed star underneath
- Most of us are familiar with willow, especially the weeping kind. Or look for pussy willow – that's the bush that has soft, fluffy, grey buds
- It's unlikely you will find swan feathers, but you may well find other birds' feathers, or you can buy a bag of colourful feathers from a crafting emporium
- The flame is represented using tealight candles – it's Candlemas after all. You can use real tealights, putting them in small jars if you are outside, or you can use electric ones if you're worried



about a large number of live candles in one place. You could even gift the electric tealights to the worshippers, for them to take home for further contemplation

- Brigid's Crosses are easy to make, and can be a part of your worship. The instructions are in the appendices
- The serpent can be represented with pictures, or they can be made using plasticine or play-doh. While adults might be uncomfortable with this symbol, children will enjoy making their own serpents – an alternative to making Brigid's Cross
- Why not represent the sheep with some sheep's cheese? Or you can use pictures to draw a parallel between the lambing season and Christ The Lamb.

After your introduction to Brigid (provided in the first section), talk through each of the symbols with the worshippers. Explain their significance to Brigid and the Christian faith. Try to draw parallels between the old Celtic traditions and Christian meanings using the information given above. Ask worshippers to use what you have brought to decorate the altar together. Cover the altar with a white or green fabric first. If you have a large number of people, you could decorate your surroundings in addition to the altar. In a church especially, this can look very beautiful and evocative.

#### Activity Two: Make a Brigid Cross

Brigid Crosses are traditionally made from reeds but can be made from several alternatives so long as they are pliable. If you are in a rural area you will be able to get hold of straw from a local farmer or someone who keeps horses. Alternatively you can buy long craft straws made of paper. It all depends on how messy you want to be. There are videos on Youtube, but there are simple instructions in the appendices.

It's a good idea to practice making a cross at home so you can demonstrate to your congregation. You could also print off instructions if you think it might help.

Ask people to make their cross in silence if they can, prayerfully asking God as they weave the straws to dwell in their hearts and for them to be as constantly aware of Him within them just as Brigid remained constantly focussed on Him. The Brigid Cross will be a constant reminder of God's presence with us, the straws representing our prayers as we weave them together.

#### Activity Three: Plant Seeds

Seeds are completely magical. You can buy packets of seed, but beware of collecting from the wild unless you know which seeds are illegal to collect. You're pretty safe with acorns, conkers and sweet chestnuts though. Plant each one as representing your hopes, ideas and dreams. Use small cardboard plantpots, available from good garden centres and DIY stores. They are more eco friendly, and your worshippers can take their seed home with them.

When planting them, encourage people to do so prayerfully, thinking about the coming year and what they want to grow within themselves that will enable them to draw closer to Jesus.

#### Activity Four: Share Food Relating to Brigid

Brigid is associated with seed cake particularly, but as ginger is one of the plants associated with her, you could make a ginger cake instead. Or you could share a ginger tea. And as the lamb is especially important, why not share sheep's cheese with crackers? Use this as a Candlemas celebration feast as an integral part of your worship, rather than afterwards.

Say this prayer before you share together:

**Loving God bless the food we eat together  
bless the drink we share together  
And keep our homes and ourselves  
in Your loving embrace always, O God,  
Amen**

*Adapted from 'Celtic Daily Prayer', Northumbrian Community*



### Activity Five: Light Candles

As part of your celebrations, light candles (the Flame of Brigid and Candlemas) and offer prayers for family and friends. You can use the candles to decorate your altar.

Use the following prayer after your candles are lit:

**Brigid of the golden flame and fiery inspiration, we welcome you.  
Please bring us the inspiration and motivation we need  
to draw ever closer to Jesus Christ, Son of God.  
On this day we pray that your sacred flame leads us ever forward to the everlasting light.  
Amen.**

*Adapted from a prayer written by Rev. Laurie Sue Brockway*

<http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/prayer/2010/02/goddess-chants-and-prayers.aspx?p=6>

### **Section Four: Suggested Worship**

*Note to Leader: this is an example of how you might construct an outdoor worship. Feel free to change it to fit your circumstances; change the activities; do them in a different order; make up your own.*

1. Open with prayer:

**Brigid  
You were a woman of peace.  
Through your care you brought harmony where there was conflict.  
Through your fire and faith you brought light to the darkness.  
You brought hope to the downcast.  
May the mantle of your peace cover those who are troubled, anxious and forgotten.  
May your peace be firmly rooted in our hearts and in our world.  
Inspire us to act justly and to revere all that God has made.  
Brigid you were a voice for the wounded, the weary, the lonely  
Strengthen what is weak within us.  
Calm us into a quietness that heals and listens to the still small voice of other in need,  
and of God.  
May we grow each day into greater wholeness in mind, body and spirit.  
Amen.**

*Adapted from the website of the Parish of St Agnes Cathedral, Rockville Centre, New York.*

<http://www.stagnescathedral.org/Prayers/St%20Brigid.html>

2. Use the introduction in Section One to introduce Brigid to your worshippers.

3. Build an altar together, outdoors if possible, or decorate the church if you are indoors. See Activity One in Section Three for instructions on how to do this.

4. When you have built your altar, ask your worshippers to take a candle and light it.

5. Say this prayer together:

**Brigid of the golden flame and fiery inspiration, we welcome you.  
Please bring us the inspiration and motivation we need  
to draw ever closer to Jesus Christ, Son of God.  
On this day we pray that your sacred flame leads us ever forward to the everlasting light.  
Amen.**

6. *Adapted from a prayer written by Rev. Laurie Sue Brockway*

<http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/prayer/2010/02/goddess-chants-and-prayers.aspx?p=6>

Take a few moments of silence. Invite people to explore quietly in their hearts how they might move closer to Jesus, and to place their candle on the altar when they are ready.

7. When the candles have all been placed, you could sing a song together. Make it a simple song that can be picked up by rote and doesn't need wordsheets or music. There are examples on the Taize website [https://www.taize.fr/en\\_article338.html](https://www.taize.fr/en_article338.html).

8. For Brigid it was important for "her mind to be constantly on God", and to be constantly aware that it was so. Listen to this story (*Note to Leader – you could ask one or more of the worshippers to read this for you*):

One day Brendan the Navigator was standing on a cliff looking out to sea. Suddenly two whales jumped out of the water and began to fight. A great battle took place and gradually the smaller whale became weaker. St Brendan saw that it was only a matter of time before the bigger whale killed him, But just as he was about to be killed the smaller whale

shouted out with a human voice calling on St Brigid to save him, And with that the big whale stopped fighting and swam away, leaving the small whale unharmed.

Now St Brendan was watching all this, and he became very upset. He said to himself, 'Why did the whale call on Brigid to save him and not me? These whales are used to seeing me on the sea; they all know I am a holy man and that I can get whatever I want from God. Why then, did the whale ignore me and call on Brigid?'

St Brendan could find no answer to this question, so he decided that the only thing to do was to ask Brigid herself for an explanation. So he called his followers and they got into their boat, rowed back to Ireland and proceeded to Kildare to consult Brigid.

When St Brendan met St Brigid he told her what had happened and asked her to explain why the whale had considered her to be a greater saint than himself, and had ignored him even though he was actually on the spot when the incident occurred.

'Tell me,' said St Brigid, 'Is your mind constantly on God? Are you constantly aware of Him?'

'Well,' said St Brendan, 'I am generally aware of God, but I live a very busy and dangerous life. Often the sea is very rough and storms arise. On these occasions I forget all about God as I am so preoccupied trying to keep afloat.'

'That is the explanation,' said Brigid, 'for since the first day I set my mind on God I have never taken it away from Him, and I never will.'

Is your mind constantly on God, like Brigid's? Or are you more like Brendan, generally aware of God but a bit too busy to keep Him on your mind always? Do you even perhaps forget about Him sometimes as you go about your daily lives? If you are realistic, it's probably most likely the latter. How can we be more like Brigid?

*Note to Leader: here you could move into making a Brigid Cross which people can take home and hang on their mantle (the traditional place to hang a Brigid cross) as a constant reminder of the presence of God.*

*Or you could move into the sharing of a Brigid Feast together.*

9. Activity of your choice....

10. Share a Brigid Feast – this is a lovely way to finish your worship.

*Note to Leader: if you choose to share a Feast, make sure the tea is prepared during the storytelling. You will need a helper to do it for you.*

You will need to make seed cake in advance (there are recipes on the internet, but there is one in the appendices). Make sure you have a gluten free option to be inclusive. Provide sheep's cheese and crackers. Try to source gluten free crackers. Sainsbury's has a good Free From range, and other supermarkets have similar.

The tea should be ginger, which is a herb associated with Brigid.

While the tea is mashing, ask people to think about their connection with God and their ongoing discipleship with Christ. In the silence pour the tea into two large mugs/cups. Explain why you have used ginger, seedcake and sheep's cheese for your feast. Then give one to two people who are sitting opposite one another in the circle. Ask them to take a sip, wipe the rim and give to the next person, moving clockwise, saying as they hand the cup over:

**Deep peace of our Loving God be with you**

## References

'The Celtic Alternative', Shirley Toulson

'Listening for the Heartbeat of God', Philip Newell

'Where Three Streams Meet', Sean o' Dumn

'Celtic Daily Prayer', Northumbria Community

<http://www.stagnescathedral.org/Prayers/St%20Brigid.html>

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[https://www.taize.fr/en\\_article338.html](https://www.taize.fr/en_article338.html)





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## Our Wondrous Story



### Section One: Introduction

The purpose of these activities and this service is to reflect on our journey - where we are here and now; and to look to the future. Paul's conversion helps us to think about journeying.

### Section Two: Good to Know

Paul had a life story, which can be considered as one of two halves. A significant event changed him and the direction of his life. He had friends who helped him along the way.

We all have a life story, and there will have been key points where direction has changed; we also may have changed. We too will have been influenced by key people along the way.

Use Acts 9:1-13 and Psalm 135

Perhaps have Paul's conversion written out on a scroll. You could have enough copies to give everyone, or you could be the "grand master", reading from it as a messenger may have done in the past. You could "oldify" the paper and use a suitable, readable "ye olde englishe" font, with a red ribbon holding it rolled up when you're not reading from it. You can oldify the paper doing one of the following:

1. Paint the tea on with a sponge. Apply it unevenly to the paper in order to make an older look.
2. Apply the tea with a tea bag. Make sure the tea bag is not too hot before using.
3. Pour the tea directly onto the paper.

You might be able to put the paper through your printer if you iron the crinkles out first and your printer is very forgiving, or you could age it after you have printed it if your printer ink is waterproof.

### Section Three: Related Activities

#### Activity One:

Hammer a stick or a stake into ground and say 'This is now; and this is where we are. How did we get here? What is our story? What route did we follow?'

Give each person a long piece of string and invite them to fasten one end to the stake. Then ask them to each walk out in the direction of their birthplace. Knowing where the points of the compass are will help you, and you will need to have a reasonable idea of where towns and cities are based in relation to them; children are unlikely to know. Then invite people to walk a proportionate distance away from the stake (ie those born nearby stop closer to stake, those born far away are furthest). From that point participants look at the string that is the "path of their life" and look for some object along the way that is significant, unusual or striking that can be used to represent a memory of a significant event or place or person in their life story. Leaving the strings on the ground, gather everyone together and invite people to share their stories if they want. There should be no compulsion to share of course, but hopefully some will be happy to do so.

You might prompt people with questions: why have you chosen your item; what was the event or person that influenced you at that time; what was it like; how did it make you feel; how has it influenced your journey so far?





### Activity Two:

Create a rope line either laying it out yourself prior to the activity; or invite participants in pairs or groups to set one up for the others to follow. Remember our journeys will have twists and turns and hazards to negotiate, the rope line needs to sensibly reflect this.



Working in pairs one is blindfolded and takes on the role of Paul, the other takes on the role of Paul's friend who guides him to Damascus. Make sure people understand there is a risk for the blindfolded person and that his/her care is the guide's responsibility. Keep an eye out for children who might think it funny to guide their blindfolded partner into an obstacle.

Then ask people to swop roles. Afterwards, bring people together and encourage them to talk about their experiences. Use the following questions to help guide the discussion: how well did we listen to guidance; how safe did we feel; how comfortable was it; how do we think Paul felt;

what do we think our goals are and where do they fit into God's plan for us?

### **Section Four: Suggested Worship**

*Note to Leader: begin your worship with reading Acts 9:1-13, as described above. You can do either or both of the activities, and close with the outline given below:*

1. Read Psalm 135. This may seem like a review of history, recalling the story of what God has done for his people, but history is not simply the telling of a story, neither is it told merely to commemorate events that occurred in the past. In this psalm, history is told to reveal who God is and, eventually, to summon us to praise God for who he is – as is evident in the opening and closing verses of the psalm (vs 1-3,19-21).
2. Prayer: hand out bubble mixture to everyone. You can either buy it ready made, which has the advantage of coming in its own containers, or you can make your own. Ask people to blow bubbles of thanks for all the good things in their life.
3. Closing Prayer: "The Path of Life"

**When the path is hard he will be with you.**

**When the road is unclear he will be your guide.**

**When the journey is difficult he will hold your hand.**

**When the destination seems far away he will stay by your side.**

**When the way is dark he will be your light.**

**When you cannot see the way ahead he will protect you.**

**When all seems lost he will give you victory.**

**When you feel alone, afraid and uncertain he will hold you forever.**

**When you go he will always go with you.**

**Amen**

*From David Clowes '500 More Prayers for All Occasions' No. 334 published by David C. Cook, 2010. (Use only for non-commercial purposes).*





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## May: Julian of Norwich



*Julian of Norwich*

*'Disoriented Theology'*

<https://disorientedtheology.wordpress.com/2013/08/16/all-shall-be-well-chapter-4-julian-of-norwich/>

### **Section One: Introduction to Julian of Norwich**

Julian was an English mystic who lived in a small cell attached to the Church of St Julian in Norwich. We know very little of her, not even her real name. She was not a hermit, the local community being able to access her, and she able to leave her cell. Rather, she was an anchoress. An anchoress is someone who chooses to withdraw from the world to live a solitary life of prayer.

The word “anchoress” comes from the Greek “anachoreo” meaning to withdraw. The Rule of Life for anchoresses stipulates that anchoresses’ cells must have three windows, so in this respect, Julian was not extraordinary. The Rule of Life stipulates that:

- one window should look onto the sanctuary of the church, allowing her to take communion
- one should look on to the church grounds through which she communicates with those who care for her. In Julian’s case, there were two maids who looked after her
- one should look on to the street, through which people needing counsel could talk to her.

When Julian was 31 years old she became desperately ill, and was expected to die. While she was ill she had several visions, referred to by her as “showings”. Once recovered she recorded them in “Revelations of Divine Love”. There were 16 showings, or revelations, in total.

Possibly the most famous of her visions, which we shall use as a part of our meditations, is that of a hazelnut in the palm of her hand. God shows her that just as He did with the nut, He made her, He loves her and He keeps her. And just as she holds the hazelnut in her hand, He holds His creation in His.

While Julian wrote down her Revelations as soon as she was able, it was some years before she was able to understand what she had seen. Her visions occurred in 1373, but it wasn’t until 1388 she was able to begin to expound fully on her visions and to write a conclusion. There are two versions of her “Revelations”, the shorter one being earlier, the longer one written later when she reached a full understanding of what God had shared with her.

### **Section Two: Good to Know**

Julian’s Saint’s Day is on 8 May.

Julian had three windows in her cell, each of which represented a distinct part of her spiritual life:

One window opened onto the interior of the church her cell was attached to. For her, this was the window through which she looked for God’s love and through which she accessed her spiritual food. You could represent the idea of this window with the colour green, a colour which is associated with growth and safety – we might think of that as spiritual growth and safety in God’s care. This colour is said to have healing powers. It’s relaxing to the eye and soul, and is the colour of peace.

One window opened onto the street, through which she ministered to others. It symbolises Julian’s compassion and her service to others. In her words it’s the window through which she was “there and with”, through which she “loved and listened”, and “let be”. You could represent this window with purple and blue because blue is associated with depth and stability, and symbolises loyalty, strength, calmness and trust. Purple is the colour of royalty – for Jesus, His royalty meant service. You could call this her “love thy neighbour” window. You could go even further and say this is the “share your cloak”

window, in the tradition of St Martin. St Martin is the saint of chaplaincy – he tore his cloak in half to share with a beggar. And chaplaincy can be boiled down to walking alongside others as they journey, and being an “intentional presence”.

One window opened onto the church garden, through which her servants tended to her. This was the window where she received the service of others. This window is pink because it is the colour of wisdom. It’s also the colour of love and friendship – in this context, that might mean the love of others for us and their friendship with us. Through this window, Julian had the wisdom to receive the love and service of others, hence the colour. The window symbolises Julian’s humanity.

### **Section Three: Related Activities**

#### Activity One: Presence to God and Love of God (the spiritual)

This activity looks through Julian’s window on to the church interior. Through this window we look for, and receive, God’s love – it is your God Window. Only when we can receive love can we give it. This window helps us to find our inner room, and teaches us to reach out from our inner room to others through the Window of Compassion.

To long is to pray and to seek, not just now, or when times are hard, but at all times, and continually.

Bible readings: (*Note to Leader: print each one out and hand out to random people to read out when prompted*)

- ❖ Matthew 14:13
- ❖ Mark 1:35
- ❖ Mark 6:46
- ❖ Mark 14:32
- ❖ Luke 4:42 (1<sup>st</sup> sentence)
- ❖ Luke 22:39, 41
- ❖ John 6:15

Give everyone a small piece of coloured card and a pencil. Ask them to find somewhere quiet in the place where you are holding your outdoor service and to think about the following questions:

- What space do you need to put aside daily, weekly, or monthly (or even all three) to keep a good and true connection between yourself and the divine? What might you do with that space?
- Think about books, music, and activities that might help that connection
- Think about the relationships you already have that help you, and new relationships you could seek out.

*Note to Leader: suggest that as a part of their meditation they try to look at where they are and at the things that surround them. Insects humming, or creeping about, birds singing, buildings nearby, colours, sounds and smells. To help concentrate their minds suggest they draw the sounds they hear onto one side of their card.*

*When you draw people together again, invite them to write on the other side of their card one small thing they are going to change when they get home.*

#### Activity Two: Presence to Others and Service to Others (the servant)

This activity is based on Julian’s window that faced on to the street, where she gave counsel to people visiting her in her cell. You will need lots of reasonably flat pebbles or cobbles. You can get these by the bag at DIY stores and garden centres. Make sure they are pale enough to write on. Wash them before you use them, they’re dusty and the pens won’t write on them as easily. You’ll also need permanent markers (like Sharpies, but you can get cheaper versions).

First of all ask people to consider the following:

- What are your life roles? Think about each role you play: father, son, brother, colleague; mother, daughter, sister, boss....

These are the gifts you share. Write them on a pebble using a permanent marker. You can use as many pebbles as you like.

- What can you do that will keep your body healthy in order for you to serve?

These are the gifts you can give to yourself. Write them on a pebble using a permanent marker. You can use as many pebbles as you like.

When everyone has finished writing, if you are in a church garden, use the pebbles to build a small cairn.

### ***Building a cairn***

Make sure the base is made up of the flattest rocks to form the base of the cairn, then stack the stones in a cone shape. Use care, as a sturdy base will allow you to create a taller cairn. Often, it works well to use large or semi-large stones, then use smaller rocks to fill in the spaces between the stones. Place the stones close together in a locking pattern. Once the base is in place, add the second layer of stones. Place the layer so the edges of the stones are staggered with the stones of the first layer, similar to building a wall with staggered bricks. This general pattern will make your rock cairn more stable. Continue to add rocks to the cairn. If there are wobbly spots or a stone doesn't settle securely against the layer below it, add smaller stones to act as stabilizers, shims or wedges. If it helps, you can place a few of the stones on edge. There will be lots of smaller stones in the bag you bought, so make sure you have them with you to plug any gaps.

If you choose to build a cairn it becomes your whole service, rather than being a part. When everyone's stones are in place, finish with a closing prayer like this one:

**God our Creator and Friend, we give thanks for the wonderful gift of life, with all its joys, all its responsibilities, all its experiences and all its opportunities.**

**We praise You for the good health and the daily food we enjoy, for the shelter and care of our homes; and the blessing of the love and loyalty of our friends.**

**We bless you for work honestly done, for games well played, and for all the truth we have learned and the good we have been able to achieve.**

**We thank You for the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness and salvation we have received through Him, for His presence with us always and for the service into which He has called us. May we always heed His teaching. May we always hear and respond to His call**

**Help us to express our thanks not only in our praises and prayer, but also through the lives we lead; through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Amen**

*Adapted from The Book of a Thousand Prayers, Angela Ashwin*

### **Activity Three: Presence to Self and Service of Others (the physical)**

This activity is based on the window that gave Julian access to the garden, the churchyard and the world of nature. Through this window she communicated with the two women who looked after her and served her. It is the window through which we should allow ourselves to receive the hand of friendship and acknowledge our needs. When we receive the love of others, then we have love to give to others.

Ask people to consider and accept in wisdom:

- Who they are and who they are called to be
- Contemplate where, or from whom, they might receive the support to be who they are called to be
- Consider their God given true purpose, or mission, or vocation.

Using found objects in your setting, ask people to create a picture or sculpture that represents who they are and from whom/where they might receive their support. It doesn't need to look like anything to anyone else; it is purely a personal expression of a person's discernment. Creating something with one's hands allows one to think and leave space to hear God's still small voice.

If your setting is rather barren and collecting found objects is difficult, you could use air drying clay, and invite people to place their creations around the setting. This works really well in a garden.



### **Activity Four: Julian's Hazelnut**

Leader reads the words of Julian of Norwich:

'And in this he showed me a little thing, the quantity of a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed. And it was as round as any ball. I looked upon it with the eye of my understanding, and thought, 'What may this be?' And it was answered generally thus, 'It is all that is made.' I marvelled how it might last, for I thought it might suddenly have fallen to nothing for littleness. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and ever shall, for God loves it. And so have all things their beginning by the love of God.



'In this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it. The second that God loves it. And the third, that God keeps it. But what is this to me? Truly, the Creator, the Keeper, the Lover. For until I am substantially 'oned' to him, I may never have full rest nor true bliss. That is to say, until I be so fastened to him that there is nothing that is made between my God and me.'

**Leader:** God made you, God loves you, God keeps you.

Seeing the fragile thing in the palm of her hand, Julian wondered, 'I was amazed that it could last, for I thought that because of its littleness it would suddenly have fallen into nothing.'

Suggest that people go off into the surrounding area to find something that speaks to them of God's love for them, in the same way the hazelnut spoke to Julian. Bring people together to share what they have found, and place it at a small shrine. The shrine can be for Julian, or if you think too many people might be uncomfortable, a shrine to Jesus, God or the Trinity, in whose hands we are held.

#### **Section Four: Suggested Worship**

1. Opening Prayer:

**Do You strengthen and prepare our souls first of all,  
Good of all good, our Jesus,  
And then ordain means whereby we may do something for You.  
For no-one could bear to receive as much as we have done and pay nothing in return.  
Here are our lives, our honour, our will, we are Yours,  
Use us according to Your desire.  
We know well how little we are capable of,  
But we shall be able to do all  
Provided You withdraw not yourself from us.  
Amen**

*St Teresa of Avila (adapted)*

2. It takes 1.5hrs to do all four activities. If you don't have time to do all of these, you could spread them over two consecutive services. They don't need to be in a particular order, but it makes more sense to do them in the order given.

3. Closing hymn (sung to 'Truro'):

**All shall be well! Thus down the years  
These words to Julian once declared  
Re-echo like a song of hope  
Singing among today's despairs.  
All shall be well! The power of sin  
Shall not, at last, victorious be;  
But love that made and makes us whole  
Shall fill the whole eternity.  
All shall be well! Our mother Christ,  
Who heals our wounds in Christ the Son,  
Who seals us with the Spirit's love,  
Shall make the sin-divided whole.  
All shall be well! These words of God  
Have greater power than we can know.  
God holds the world. The world responds  
In love: 'God loves! All shall be well!'**

*Adapted from 'Barefeet and Buttercups' Ruth Burgess*

#### **References**

'Through Julian's Windows', Elizabeth Ruth Obbard

'Barefeet and Buttercups', Ruth Burgess

'The Book of a Thousand Prayers', Angela Ashwin



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## Over and Under, Round and About



### Section One: Introduction

Using Psalm 139, this subject helps us to take time to appreciate our place in God's creation.

### Section Two: Good to Know

Bear in mind as you plan your service, or your activities, that time is no boundary to God. He knows our ways, and whichever way we go, far and wide, high and low God is there holding us. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, and God will lead each of us to the way everlasting.

### Section Three: Related Activities

#### Activity One:

Give participants a small notebook or small pieces of paper, along with pens, pencils, or crayons. Top tip: pencils and crayons are best when its wet or cold. You can get small notebooks pretty cheaply, but if you'd rather use paper, get some coloured card and tear it into A5-A6 size. The roughness of the torn edges gives the pieces a nice feel. It also blurs the edges of the paper and makes it less restrictive when people are drawing.



Search the area to find a “(secret) special” place where they can sit or stand and reflect. This is best done in silence. When found, people need to settle themselves into the experience; so before they move off suggest they maybe close their eyes, maybe take some deep breaths, alert themselves to the smells and the feel of the air in their lungs and listen to their heartbeat. If you want to give people the opportunity to sit, visit your friendly neighbourhood carpet shop and ask them if they have any out of date sample squares. They are perfect for providing somewhere dry to sit.

If you are working with children, set clear parameters regarding how far they are allowed to wander, and make sure they understand they must remain in sight of the Leaders.

Using all the senses first they will consider what is to the East, (where the day starts with the sunrise), then South, (from where the midday sun shines and provides warmth), West (sunset), and North (sleep); then up and down, recording what they sensed in each direction. Finally, they look inward. To keep control of the time it is advisable to suggest to your group when to move their thoughts to the next point. They don't need to move physically, just turn to face the next point.

From their experiences, ask people to construct a psalm of their own, or a poem. The structure might look like this:

- To the East I ...
- To the South I ...
- To the West I ...
- To the North I ...
- Inside I feel ...
- I am thankful for ....

*Note to Leader: you could prepare your pieces of paper with these prompts in advance.*



Bring people back to the centre, and invite them to share their psalm or poem if they are comfortable. Explain that while creating great works of literature is a bonus, it is the expression of a thankful heart that God is looking for.

You could either give people the opportunity to decorate their work during your service or to do so when they get home, using natural colours. They might like to share it with friends, or even give it to someone who inspires them when they have finished.

#### **Section Four: Suggested Worship**

*Note to Leader: it is always lovely to finish with an act of worship. You could begin your time together by opening with Psalm 139, followed by the activity above (which is in itself an act of worship) and close with the gathering together below. Feel free to put the prayers on a printout if you're not sure people will join in with the responses.*

##### **Gathering of the community**

Leader: Grace to you and peace from our loving God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 1.3)

**All: We give thanks to God always.**

*If a local greeting has not been given, one can be given here.*

Leader: Preparations for our worship today began in Canada. In that land's language of Iroquois (pronounced ear-uh-kwa) *Canada* means *village*. As members of the household of God, Christians around the world indeed inhabit one village. When Christians worship, they link themselves to this worldwide village full of beauty, of struggle and of hope.

Let us pray.

Loving God, you call all – from homes and offices, from mines and factories, from fields and shops, from fishing boats and herds, from schools and hospitals, from prisons and detention centres – to be one in fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

**All: Make us one in Christ.**

Leader: The indigenous peoples of Canada honour an ancient ritual of praying while facing in different directions. Let us also unite in a prayer that is used by them, facing the appropriate direction.

*Facing east*

Leader: From the East, the direction of the rising sun, we receive peace and light and wisdom and knowledge.

**All: We are grateful for these gifts, O God.**

*Facing south*

Leader: From the South come warmth, guidance, and the beginning and the end of life.

**All: We are grateful for these gifts, O God.**

*Facing west*

Leader: From the West comes the rain, purifying waters, to sustain all living things.

**All: We are grateful for these gifts, O God.**

*Facing north*

Leader: From the North come the cold and mighty wind and the white snows, giving us strength and endurance.

**All: We are grateful for these gifts, O God.**

*Turning towards the front, and facing upward*

Leader: From the heavens we receive darkness and light and the air of your breath.

**All: We are grateful for these gifts, O God.**

*Facing downward*

Leader: From the earth we come and to the earth we will return.

**All: We are grateful, O God, for your good creation, our earthly home.**

Leader: May we walk good paths, blessed God, living on this earth as brothers and sisters should; rejoicing in one another's blessing, sympathizing in one another's sorrows, and together with you, in the name of Jesus, and with the Spirit's awakening breath, renewing the face of the earth.

**All: Amen.**



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## September: Hildegard of Bingen



**Hildegard of Bingen**

*'Mental Floss'*

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/89478/retrobituaries-polymath-mystic-and-saint-hildegard-von-bingen>

### **Section One: Introduction to Hildegard of Bingen**

*Note to Leader: use this section to introduce Hildegard if people don't know who she is.*

Hildegard of Bingen, born in 1098, was a visionary, musician and poet. Because she was a tenth child, she was “tithed” to God and aged eight she was sent to live with a holy anchoress attached to the abbey of St Disibod. Even as a child she had visions, but it wasn't until her forties that she recorded them, beginning with her first book “Scivias”, or “Knowing the Way”. She began her own monastery, near Bingen in Germany at around 1148. She encouraged her nuns to explore new ways of worship using poetry, music and drama. Music in particular was very important to Hildegard, so when her monastery was barred briefly from including music in its worship it hit her very hard. Hildegard felt very strongly that her music came directly from God, and was an important, integral part of her monastic life. Her music survives today and is easily accessible. Obedience to God was also an important aspect of Hildegard's faith, referring to herself as a “feather on the breath of God”, and her visions as the “reflection of the living light”. Hildegard wrote explicitly about the natural world as God's creation, charged through and through with His beauty and His energy; entrusted to our care, to be used by us for our benefit, but not to be mangled or destroyed. It is fitting, then, that as we explore our faith through Hildegard of Bingen, we do so outdoors.

### **Section Two: Good to Know**

Hildegard's Saints Day is 17 September, as is the Autumn Equinox.

The moon in September is referred to as the Harvest Moon, and the harvest is often celebrated during this month.

Symbols of the Autumn Equinox:

- Gold or green candles are preferable, but you can use another colour if it signifies abundance to you
- Gratitude Oil – yes, it really is a thing! Its ingredients comprise six essential oils associated with the Holy Land. Oil has very strong Biblical connotations, used to anoint the beard of Aaron and used by an unknown woman to anoint Jesus' feet. Because its a mix of essential oils, its expensive, so you could substitute it with myrrh or frankincense fragrance oil and mix it with some olive oil for anointing. Don't apply it neat to skin
- Baskets of fruit especially apples or grapes
- Symbols of things to be thankful for eg health, career, family, friends. These are specific to each person
- Photos of family and friends who mean a lot
- The apple: the apple is the symbol of the fruit harvest. The apple figures significantly in many sacred traditions, and is often used to represent the fruit Eve ate in the Garden of Eden – an example of disobedience. The apple is also a symbol for life and immortality, for healing, renewal, regeneration and wholeness. It is associated with beauty, long life and restored youth. If you cut an apple width ways, it reveals a star containing seeds. The five points represent the elements of Earth, Air, Fire, Water with Spirit at the top, and thus also the directions of East, South, West, North and Within. We can use this idea to symbolise our faith: God's creation as earth, air, fire and water, with the uppermost arm representing the Holy Spirit, or the compass points, with our own self or inner faith represented by the uppermost arm of the star

- The colours associated with the Autumn Equinox are green, red, orange, yellow, brown and gold.

### **Section Three: Related Activities**

#### Activity One: A Feather on the Breath of God

Hildegard ‘lift(ed) my hands to God, that He may carry me as a feather, without power or strength of its own, is carried on the breath of the wind.’ This activity will ask us to consider how we, too, can be a feather on the breath of God.

Prayer

**May the living Spirit carry me where it will, as a feather on the breath of God;  
 May the creative Spirit enable me to unfurl and flower in the earth of God;  
 May the airy Spirit uphold me as a scudding cloud in the sky of God;  
 May the watery Spirit surround me as a lily within the stream of God;  
 May the powerful Spirit energise me as a powerful lion in the strength of God;  
 May the ocean Spirit support me as an oaken, towering tree within the landscape of God;  
 So that in Wisdom I may reflect God’s glory alone  
 Amen**

*Adapted from a prayer written by June Boyce-Tillman in ‘The Creative Spirit’*

Hand everyone a feather (colourful ones can be bought in bags from most craft shops). If you are holding your service in a park with a lake or a stream, ask people to prayerfully consider how they might allow themselves to be carried on the breath of God and place the feather in the lake or stream. If there is no water body and its breezy enough you could just let them go into the air. Or if you are in a church garden, or if there is no wind, you could fill a large trough or similar with water, and allow the feather to rest on the surface of the water. Make sure your water container/s is big enough to take everyone’s feather without laying them on top of one another.

You could add to this activity, or replace it with the following:

Provide everyone with the materials to make their own feathers. Have a template to hand for those who would rather work from a pattern (usually adults; children will generally crack on with it and make their own version). Use coloured card and have a hole punch to hand so you can thread it onto string. Invite people to write a prayer on the feather, asking God to transport them to His will as a feather on His breath. You can either tie the feathers individually into trees (using a long enough piece of string that will allow them to flutter) or you can fasten three or four in a row along one piece of string and hang in a tree.

#### Activity Two: Asking God for His Guidance and the Strength to Persevere.

The acorn is a symbol of strength and power. In the autumn, these tiny yet hardy little seeds drop from the oak trees to land on the ground. Most will be eaten by passing wildlife, with only a few surviving to form a new tree in the spring. Because the acorn only appears on a fully mature oak, it is often considered a symbol of the patience needed to attain goals over long periods of time. It represents perseverance and hard work.

In the Bible oaks were associated with strength and long life. The Hebrew name for oak is derived from the word “providence”, which in turn means “divine guidance”. Providence is an attribute of God, and frequently associated with God’s ability to see ahead. For Jewish people providence meant that God not only directed every detail of creation, but also the life of the individual.

Hildegard of Bingen likened the soul to a tree:

‘The soul is in the body as the sap is in the tree; and the powers of the soul are like the figure of the tree.....Understanding in the soul is like the green vigour of the branches and the leaves of the tree; mind like the first fruit bursting forth. But reason is like the fruit in the fullness of maturity; while sense is like the height and spread of the tree. And in the same way, the human body is strengthened and supported by the soul.’

This activity will explore our own perseverance in following Christ using the acorn as a symbol. This activity is best in a woodland, or somewhere where there are lots of woodland trees. It’s a fun activity that requires your worshippers to work together to create the shape of a tree on the floor. It can be an excellent opportunity for witness in a public place, and you could make it a community event or something to do with a primary school if you or your church has links. It’s very “Forest School”.

You will need:

- lots of twigs, branches, leaves, pebbles and any other natural objects that are to hand
- acorns

- cardboard pots
- compost

Using materials they can find on the woodland floor as your group to create a picture or a sculpture of a tree. It needs to be big enough for your group to stand on when its completed. This can take as little or as long as you like; it depends on the size of your group, the age range, the amount of floor space you have.



When the picture is complete, ask your group to think about whereabouts on the tree they would place themselves in terms of their faith walk. Are they thoroughly rooted in their faith? Are they somewhat detached, on the ground somewhere away from the tree? Are they close to God, high up in the branches, or are they climbing upwards towards a closer relationship with Him? Once everyone has placed him/herself, ask each one to say why s/he has placed him/herself there. If someone would rather not say, that's OK.

If you are in a woodland where oaks are plentiful, and it's the right time of year, invite everyone to find an acorn. If you are not in a woodland or there are few oaks, you could either collect acorns in advance for your session, or use another seed that is readily available; use tree seeds if you can, as the tree is the significant part of this activity.

Once everyone has an acorn, invite them to prayerfully plant it in a pot, asking God to guide them in their faith life and to persevere in their

journey with Christ.

### Activity Three: Being a Reflection of the Living Light

Jesus asks us to be the Light. People should see Him shining out from within us. But this can be very difficult for most of us, and we can only do it through God's strength.

For this you will need to collect jars in advance. You will need florists' wire to make handles if you want to hang these up anywhere (how to make a handle is included in the appendices). Alternatively, you could just stand the jars among the plants in the church garden/graveyard. You can do this in a public place too, but instead of leaving the lanterns behind, place the activity close to the beginning of your service, and the lanterns can remain in place for the duration.

You can use real tealights, or you can use LED candles. Invite people to take a jar, make a handle for it (if you are doing handles) and add a candle. When everyone has a jar and a candle, share the following prayer together:

**Your light is the only light I need to light my feet  
as I travel through life's mystery.  
Your word is the only voice I need to hear,  
that still small voice that leads me  
to the places where I should be.  
Your presence by my side is the only company I need,  
as I walk this narrow road.  
Your fellowship alone is the warmth I crave  
to help me on my way.  
And just as this jar reflects the light of this candle  
Help me Lord to reflect the Light of the World.  
Amen**

Adapted from [http://www.faithandworship.com/prayer\\_journey.htm#ixzz56Wrj8S6I](http://www.faithandworship.com/prayer_journey.htm#ixzz56Wrj8S6I)

Invite everyone to hang their jar from trees or fences, or to just place them around the space where you are.



Activity Four: Planting Bulbs as a Promise to Follow God's Direction.

This is an excellent time to plant tree seeds and shrubs. They have all of winter in the darkness to establish and germinate. Plant bulbs that will hide in the earth until early Spring beckons. You can do this in the church garden or graveyard if it has one, or you could make it a community event, planting bulbs in a community garden or local park. You will need to liaise with the local Council and/or the park's "Friends" group if you want to plant in the park. Bulb planting is popular with communities and schools, so there is great scope for this to be a witness to non-churchgoing people.



Before you begin planting, gather people together, give them a bulb and ask them to silently ask God for His direction for the season, and for the strength and courage to do as He asks. When they begin to grow in the spring, they will be a reminder of the promise of obedience to God. Make each one a hope, idea or aspiration for Spring

Activity Five: Asking for God's Protection, and for Help in Being Obedient to His Call.

This is a simple ritual to help encourage harmony between people and God's creation. We often forget that the environment that surrounds us is God's and that we are charged with caring for it. This is an outdoor activity, but can be adapted to indoors if you don't have access to the outdoors.

- A large bowl of fresh earth from the garden
- An assortment of iron nails
- A brown or green candle to represent the land

First, decorate the church altar, or create one on a table that everyone can gather round. If you are creating an altar, do it outside if you have access. Place the bowl of earth, the candle and the nails in the middle of your altar. Invite your worshippers to gather around the table.

Open with the following prayer:

**Earth, symbol of security, stability, the core of all God's creation,  
bring peace and harmony into our homes and our lives;  
harmony and peace that we may share with others  
at this season of thanksgiving.  
May our friends and families be well,  
our house be a haven,  
and our table be one of hospitality for all comers.  
May the earth, the soil, the land,  
ground us and protect us and  
those we love, and those we are yet to meet.  
Let our homes be a safe place,  
a secure place, a harmonious place  
for all those who enter,  
and let the love they encounter within our walls go with them when they leave.  
As you will it Lord, so it shall be.  
Amen.**

Ask the worshippers to focus on the bowl of earth and to ponder on their home or their place of worship, or perhaps somewhere outdoors that is very special. Think about what makes your house a home, or what makes that outdoor space special. If you have access to outdoors, ask your worshippers to take a small handful of the earth and to scatter it, returning to the altar when they have done so.

When everyone has returned to the altar, put the candle in the remaining soil, making sure it is securely tamped down to hold the candle steady. Light the candle, and invite people to take a nail and stick it into the soil. Iron is known as a protective material throughout many cultures, and in ours nails hold a special significance, denoting the obedience of Christ to the point of death. Ask your worshippers to think of ways in which they could work towards the protection of the environment, of God's creation. Once you feel everyone who wishes to has placed a nail in the soil, say the following together:

**Iron nails in the ground, symbol of Christ's love for us, protect our homes, our families and ourselves, just as we will try to protect and care for the environment that surrounds us.  
Help us to be open to the still, small voice of God, and be obedient to Him, even as Christ was obedient.  
Amen.**

### Activity Six: Giving Thanks

You will need:

- a bowl of Gratitude Oil (see Section Two)
- tealights
- pretty postcards  
Patternbox does some really lovely designs, and are readily available on the internet.

Invite your worshippers to take a moment to reflect on the abundance in their life. Abundance doesn't necessarily mean material or financial gain – you may be abundant because you have friends who love you, a satisfying family life, or a rewarding career. Think about the things you have for which you are most grateful.

Each person should light a candle, and call out the things that they are thankful for, saying 'I am thankful for.....because....'

It might go something like this:

*I am thankful for my health, because it allows me to feel well.*

*I am thankful for my children, for keeping me young.*

*I am thankful for my career, because each day I get paid to do what I love.*

*I am thankful for my job, because I am able to feed my family.*

*I am thankful for my garden, because it provides me fresh herbs.*

*I am thankful for my Christian brothers and sisters, because they make me feel spiritually complete...*

Allow each person to express their thankfulness for everything in their life. If your group is quite big, suggest that each person calls out the one thing they are most thankful for, holding all the other things in their heart in gratitude. When a person has lit a candle and given thanks, they should dip a finger in the oil and anoint their own forehead.

Take a few more minutes to meditate on the candle flame, and to focus on the notion of abundance. While you're thinking about things you are grateful for, you might also wish to consider the people in your life that are grateful towards you, for the things you have done. Recognise that gratitude is a gift that keeps on giving, and that counting one's blessings is an important thing to do, because it reminds us of how truly fortunate we are.

Finally, it's important that one of the things about being thankful is that we should let people who have made us happy know they've done so. Invite your worshippers to think about someone specific they wish to thank for their words or actions, to take a postcard from the altar and write what they are thankful for with a view to posting the card to that person. It's helpful to ask one person in the group to take responsibility for posting them to ensure the cards don't sit on someone's mantelpiece unposted.

#### **Section Four: Suggested Worship**

*Note to Leader: you can use this service for your Harvest service. You will need to request the congregation brings produce (flowers, wild-gathered berries etc, fruit, veg – not tins or packets! Stress the importance of the freshness.*

1. Your altar should be dressed in the very best produce you can find from field, forest and market, from garden and the wild. Apples, pears, damsons, sloes, rose hips, elderberries, blackberries, hawthorn berries, the possibilities are large. If you collect from the wild, don't be greedy - always leave plenty of fruit and berries for the birds and wee creatures. You can make the altar decoration a part of the service, or similarly you could make an outdoor shrine in thanks for the bounty we receive.

2. Opening Prayer:

Leader: Loving God, by whose grace your servant Hildegard, kindled with the Fire of your love, became a burning and shining light in your Church, her voice and her music soaring to the heavens. Grant that we also may be aflame with the Spirit of love and discipline, and walk before you as children of light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**All: May the strengthening Spirit bear fruit in our creating;  
May the anointing Spirit touch our brokenness and heal our hardened hearts;  
May the breath of the Spirit infuse our souls with the beautiful, lingering perfumes of goodness;  
May the flowing Spirit spring up as Wisdom's fountain in our hearts;  
May the enfolding Spirit become a well-fitting garment we dear to share;**

**May the sword of the Spirit defend our vulnerability and hel up to defend others;  
 May the guiding Spirit lead us through the heights and the depths of our lives;  
 May the elemental Spirit connect us to the natural world – the world that God has created;  
 May the joyful Spirit temper the solemnity of our knowing,  
 So that we may become a soaring song within the Divine Creation.  
 Amen**

*Adapted from a prayer written by June Boyce-Tillman, 'The Creative Spirit'*

3. Bible readings:

- ❖ Psalm 104:25-34
- ❖ Sirach 43:1-5,9-10
- ❖ John 3:16-21

4. Hildegard taught that 'We are called to live in harmony 'with the elements' to maintain a proper balance in all things. When order and harmony are maintained between ourselves and God's creation, it is reflected in our health'

For her, 'Humankind does not stand imperially outside the world – we are answerable to it in that our source of life is the same as the life-source of all things – the overflow of divine light and love.'

5. Leave one of each flower, fruit and vegetable that you have, as a gift, either on the altar, or the outdoor shrine.

6. Activity of your choice.

7. Closing prayer (the words of Hildegard of Bingen):

Leader: You are music and song

You are life and living

Source of everything,

Creator of everything,

Let our voices soar in praise.

Wonderfully radiant,deep,mysterious,

You are alive in everything,

And yet we know You not, hidden always with the cloud.

The air is life, greening and blossoming.

The waters flow with life.

The sun is lit with life, fill us also with the pluse of life

The moon, when waning, is again rekindled by the sun,  
waxing with life once more, a new resurrection.

The stars shine, radiating with life-light.

All creation is gifted with the ecstasy of God's light.

Help us too to see that gift wthin ourselves

**Amen**

*Adapted from 'Meditations of Hildegard of Bingen', Gabriele Uhlein.*

**All: Lord, we give thanks for what we have received today and everyday; an abundance of food, of Your love, of Your light. We pray we too, will share food, love and light with others.**

**Amen**

**References**

'Hildegard of Bingen: an Anthology', Fiona Bowie and Oliver Davies

'Hildegard of Bingen: the Creative Spirit', June Boyce-Tilman

'Meditations with Hildegard of Bingen', Gabriele Uhlein

[http://www.faithandworship.com/prayer\\_journey.htm#ixzz56Wri8S6I](http://www.faithandworship.com/prayer_journey.htm#ixzz56Wri8S6I). Last accessed 08.02.18





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## Something Fishy: the Story of Jonah



Jonah and the Whale

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonah>

### Section One: Introduction

The Book of Jonah begins like a standard prophetic book, declaring the Word of God coming to Jonah His prophet. However, unlike other prophets, Jonah is disobedient and refused to go to Ninevah as God asks. Not only that, he runs away. He goes to Joppa in the west to catch a ship (Ninevah lay in the East). But the book shows us that no-one is beyond the reach of God's love and forgiveness – not even “foreigners”, much to Jonah's disgust.

### Section Two: Good to know

Whether Jonah is true or a factual story is by-the-by; it is the lessons we find there that are important. We don't know who wrote Jonah, but whoever wrote it thought it important enough to record. And the man Jonah existed, because he also turns up in 2 Kings.

Did you know “Jonah” means dove? The author of the book isn't known, and the action takes place around 800-750BCE

Is Jonah racist? Does God show him alternative behaviour, forgiving “even the Ninevites”. And compare the openness of the multi-god believing sailors to hear about God and to accept Him, with the bigotry of Jonah who is God's chosen prophet.

There's a hint of “slapstick”, or situation comedy in this book. Look at Jonah sulking under a tree because God saves the Ninevites. And God first sending a vine to shelter him, but then sending a worm to eat it!

### Section Three: Related Activities

#### Activity One:

Using willow withies or similarly flexible wood, create fish shapes of many sizes. A withie is a length of flexible willow twig. You will be most familiar with weeping willow, which is one of the places withies come from. If you cannot get hold of willow freely, legally or locally then look at other flexible bushes that may exist, some types of honeysuckle and snowberry *Symphoricarpos rivularis* will work well.



The idea of using withies, or alternatives, opens up some great areas for discussion - mainly around to what extent we have “lost touch” with God's creation. Who knows what a withie is and where it comes from? What do we do when we cannot purchase what we want from a store? How did we survive without knowledge of what we could use in nature as a solution to our needs? Where and when can we find what is naturally provided and how do we adapt to situations when nature deals us a blow eg storms, bad harvest? What then? Must something come from a shop for it to be acceptable?

Suppliers of willow abound on the internet, and there are a few suppliers listed in the Resources section to get you started. We offer no recommendations, however, and there are other suppliers out there.

If you're really stuck, you could try florists' wire (available from places like Hobbycraft), but as the surface is slippery it might be difficult for the string to stay in place. Try it out at home first. If you're using withies, soak them in water overnight so they will bend without breaking. Using wool or hairy string, create a network around the frame of the fish and weave natural materials into the “body” of the



fish. Prayers could be written and woven into the fish. Whatever approach taken it could be that fish are taken home or hung in trees where people can see them.

#### Activity Two:

Provide people with card cut into fish shapes. Ask them to write a prayer on them, perhaps asking God for obedience to His Word, or for Him to rescue them from distress, just as Jonah did in Jonah 2:2. Glue leaves over them to suggest scales. Hang in a nearby tree, or in the church, as witness.

#### Activity Three:

For the time rich and ambitious it is possible to create a large 3-D fish sculpture using willow withies and string. You could use several services for this, or use it for an awayday, or use it over several Sundays with the children at your church. Consider the skeleton of a fish; think about the whale in the Natural History museum now in the entrance foyer and create a framework along those lines, tying and weaving withies as appropriate to shape and strengthen. Print off a picture of the Natural History museum whale for people to look at and gain inspiration from. Don't worry about it looking insufficiently "whaley"; it's the activity as a basis of worship that's important here, not sculptorly skill.



Having created the skeleton, wool, string or other natural materials could be used to give a skin to the fish. It may be that the finished work is hung somewhere safe to give the impression that it is swimming through the air. You could use it as a "prayer fish", inviting people over a period of weeks to write out their prayers on small, card fish shapes (or Jonah shapes!) and weave them into the body of the whale.

#### Activity four:

Hand out small toy figures: Playmobil characters, Lego figures, or small soft toys. Taking materials found around the site you are using, create a shelter for them. You could add the premise that it has to be "stormproof". When everyone has finished his/her shelter, and placed "Jonah" inside, the group could check one another's shelter with a watering can fitted with a rose to imitate rain. It is good fun, and will work with both adults and children. This activity could be used to help us explore how God protects us. Ask the people to think about a time when God protected them, and invite them to share with the rest of the group if they are comfortable.



Alternatively, your shelter could represent that which Jonah made under a tree when he was sulking. His shelter was a direct snub to God, who wanted him to move towards a new future. But Jonah wouldn't move towards it. You could ask people to think about a time when they, too, sulked, or refused to move towards a new future God had waiting for them.

#### Activity Five:

For the more ambitious a full size shelter could be created. This could be done on consecutive Sundays with the children at your church. Check out 2018's Bible Month resources (<http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/the-bible/bible-month/introducing-bible-month/>) for ideas on how to explore the learning we gain from Jonah as you work. Once the shelter is finished, encourage the children to sit in it; reflect on a job well done and to consider what direction God has for us. Is He asking us to go east for Him? Are we trying to disobey and go west instead?

### **Section Four: Suggested Worship**

*Note to Leader: most of these activities will easily take up an hour, and they are your act of worship, even more so where prayer is involved. However, if you want to make your session a bit more 'service-ey', try incorporating some of the elements below.*

#### 1. Prayer: Ripples of Forgiveness

*Note to Leader: this is a lovely prayer to finish with. Jonah was disobedient, sulky and argumentative. And we are no different, not even with God. This is an opportunity to seek redemption with God.*





You will need a bowl or shallow sand pit filled with water. Invite people to pick up a stone, small rock or piece of wood; imagine it holds within it the things we've done wrong; drop it into the water praying that we don't make the same mistakes again; watch the ripples travel across the water and see that we are forgiven by God.

2. We suggest you use this hymn as a response spoken prayer to open your worship: Singing the Faith (StF) 798
3. A responsive prayer

Leader: Precious Lord Jesus, Wonderful Holy Spirit, Loving God, we are grateful You have touched us and called us to be Your servants. In our hearts we know You are within us, above us, and all around us. We thank You for the call You have put on our hearts and lives. Help us to hear Your call and dare to respond.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord You call us to follow you - to be Your disciples - and You call us to make disciples of others - to be ambassadors of Christ - to share Your reconciling love with our neighbours - to share the love You share with us. Help us to understand Your call and dare to respond.

**All: Lord hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, You call us to follow you - to be Your disciples, Your students - Your friends. Strengthen us in our calling. Help us to be disciplined in our daily practice of devotion, prayer and meditation and help us to desire that daily drawing closer to you. Help us to avail ourselves of the nourishment You provide us day by day that we may be the new creation that You seek to make us be. Draw us closer to You always and to our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus that we may better know Your will and experience the fullness of Your grace. And help us dare to experience that grace until we overflow.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, You call us to be fishers of men - to be Your ambassadors, Your ministers of reconciliation, Your righteousness in the world. Strengthen us in our calling. Lord, help us now when we see the world in its darkness.  
Help us to know what to do, what to say, and how to say it.  
When we see sickness, help us dare to heal.  
When we see poverty, help us dare to enrich.  
When we see grief, help us give dare to comfort.  
When we see power and wealth, help us dare to speak truth.  
When we see a need, help us to dare to stoop down and reach out.  
When we need to make decisions, remind us that actions truly done In Your Name and done with humility always bring love.  
Help us to dare to see for You, speak for You, and act for You.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer...**

Leader: Lord, hear our prayers for those upon our hearts today. For those in need of faith and those in need of food. For those in need of healing and those who need wholeness in their relationships.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer....**

Leader: We pray O God for: (*intercessions as shared*)

Lord, We love You. It is just that we are so often caught up in all the work we try to do we forget what we are supposed to be about. We concentrate on ourselves, our lives, our own concerns. Please forgive our humanness. And when You can, make us laugh at ourselves. We ask it in the name of Jesus, He who taught us to pray to You as one family saying,

**All Our Father...**

*Adapted from: <http://www.spirit-net.ca/sermons/b-or03se.php>*

## **Resources**

Bible Month 2018: 30 Days with Jonah, The Methodist Church

<http://www.spirit-net.ca/sermons/b-or03se.php>



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## November: Samhain, Harvest and All Saints



*'The Forerunners of Christ with Saints and Martyrs',  
Fra Angelico*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All\\_Saints%27\\_Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Saints%27_Day)

### Section One: Introduction

Samhain is a celebration of life and death, and the harvest. The church celebrates All Saints and All Souls, held on 1 and 2 November respectively.

All Saints' Day is a very old feast arising out of the tradition dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> Century of celebrating the martyrdom of the saints on their Saints Days. It wasn't until 609AD that one day in the year was set aside to remember *all* martyrs. It used to be called All Hallows' Day, which is where All Hallows' Eve gets its name. Hallow is an old name for saint. And in turn, saint is the name for a follower of Christ, not just referring to someone who has been canonised, which tends to be the modern meaning. So All Hallows' Eve is actually a Christian festival, as are the two days that follow. It's unfortunate that All Hallows' Eve in particular has morphed into something that in this country is unrecognisable as such.

So the evening vigil of the Feast has grown up in the English speaking countries as a festival in itself, All Hallows' Eve. While some Christians refuse to observe the holiday, considering it "pagan", the date is simply the eve of the feast of All Saints. In fact, many customs of Halloween reflect the Christian belief that on the Feast's vigil we mock evil, because as Christians, it has no real power over us. In the Middle Ages, poor people in the community begged for 'soul cakes', and upon receiving these, they would agree to pray for departed souls. This is the root of our modern day "trick-or-treat", originally an English construct that was exported to America and back again. The custom of masks and costumes developed to mock evil and perhaps confuse the evil spirits by dressing as one of their own. In some Christian traditions, especially in Mexico and some eastern European countries, it is an opportunity to commemorate departed relatives and friends, with picnics and the last flowers of the year.

Samhain is also about marking life and death, and remembering those who have gone before us. Christianity has a long tradition of praying for those who have died, commemorating loved ones who have passed away. There are close links between the Christian festival and the older samhain.

### Section Two: Good to Know

*Note to Leader: the plants and symbols below are associated with All Saints and with samhain. Bear them in mind when planning your worship. Symbolism is a powerful tool for helping people contemplate their faith journey.*

The moon in November is known as the Frosty Moon, reflecting that this is the time of year when frosts begin to greet us.

The following colours are associated with samhain, and can be used in your worship:

- Rich, deep colours like purples, burgundies and black, as well as harvest shades like gold and orange. Think about the colours of autumn

The following symbols are associated with samhain:

- Pictures of your ancestors
- Anything to do with the harvest, including tools – apples, ears of corn, pumpkins, squash, or root vegetables; sickles and scythes
- Yew, representing mortality
- Rosemary for remembrance
- Mulled wine (non-alcoholic versions are available)



- Dried leaves, acorns, nuts and berries
- Dark breads – rye, pumpernickel, spelt
- Corn dollies
- Pumpkins, squash, root vegetables

### **Section Three: Related Activities**

*Note to Leader: the following activities are best outdoors, but can be done indoors if people are unable to be outside. Don't try to cram them all into one service; rather you should "pick and mix" according to your audience. Some you will need to resource in advance, so give yourself time to prepare.*

#### Activity 1: Create and decorate an altar.

To celebrate the end of the old and the beginning of something new; and to celebrate death, without which there can be no resurrection.

In advance of the worship, collect a selection of related food, plants and objects as listed in the "Good to Know" section. You might even wish to ask your worshippers in advance of your service to bring pictures of relatives who have passed away. Do bear in mind, however, that this may be too evocative for people who have been recently bereaved, so make sure you liaise with the church very carefully. It is supposed to be a celebration however, and should be an upbeat and positive event.

For your altar cloth use dark, rich fabrics.

After your introduction to samhain and All Saints (provided in the first section), talk through each of the symbols with the worshippers. Explain their significance. Ask worshippers to use what you have brought to decorate the altar together. Cover the altar with fabric first. If you have a large number of people, you could decorate your surroundings in addition to the altar. In a church especially, this can look very beautiful and evocative.

#### Activity Two: Hold a celebration meal, akin to an agape or love feast.

Wesley himself held love feasts, so you could think of it as a Methodist thing to do.

This activity can be as simple or as involved as you like. If you want to use the meal as a full celebratory Feast, you'll need to liaise in advance, and ask your worshippers to contribute food. Make sure the food is true to the theme, if you can (see Section Two). Or you can keep it very simple, with yourself providing one dish to share. Whichever option you choose, you will still need some dark bread and some cider or apple juice to share.



This activity works really well in the evening, but can be done during a morning service. The advantage with the evening celebration is you can easily make it into a community event. And if you are feeling adventurous you could have a small bonfire. Use a portable fire pit, available from good DIY stores. You could also use candle-lit lanterns. These are very symbolic, providing light at a dark time, just as Jesus is also the Light of the World. Consider doing it in a local park where anyone can join. Even better, hold it in a community orchard if there is one, or a community garden. You could do this on All Hallows' Eve itself as a counterbalance to everything else going on. What a super opportunity for public witness!

For the food element, put emphasis on fruits and vegetables. Also make sure you have a loaf of a dark bread like rye or pumpernickel and a cup of apple cider or apple juice. Set up a table with candles and an autumnal centrepiece. The kind of things you could use are listed in Section Two. Put all the food on the table at once, and consider the table a sacred space.

Gather everyone around the table, and say:

Today/tonight is the day/night on which we celebrate samhain; the end of the old and the beginning of the new.

It is the end of the harvest, the last days of summer, and the cold nights wait on the other side for us.

The bounty of our labour, the abundance of the harvest, the success of the hunt, all lies before us.

We thank God and His creation the earth for all we have been given us this season, and yet we look forward to winter, a time of darkness.

Take a cup of cider/apple juice, or pour each person a cup of his/her own. If you are using one shared cup, each person takes the cup in turn and sprinkles a little bit of cider onto the earth. If you are using separate cups, you could sprinkle together. Everyone says together the prayer below:

**Summer is gone, winter is coming.  
We have planted and we have watched the garden grow.  
We have weeded, and we have gathered the harvest.  
Now it is at its end.**

Once that is done, take the dark bread and pass it round, with each person taking a piece and giving thanks to God. When everyone has taken a piece and given thanks, each person takes a second piece, crumbles it and scatters it on the ground. Both the sprinkling of the cider and scattering of the bread are a blessing on the ground that has fed you all year. When you have shared the cider and bread, share the remainder of the meal together.

Activity Three: Samhain Nature Walk

*Note to Leader: if you choose to do this activity, it becomes your whole service, rather than a part of the service*

Lead your worshippers in a meditative walk in a natural area near your church. Observe and contemplate the colours, aromas, sounds, and other sensations of the season. Experience yourself as part of the Circle of Life and reflect on death and rebirth as being an important part of Nature and of our faith. Stop at regular intervals for prayer, spoken or in silence. There are some examples of prayer below (adapted from "Praying Nature with Francis of Assisi", [www.praying-nature.com](http://www.praying-nature.com)), or you can encourage worshippers to say their own.

**Lord, grant us the wisdom to care for the earth and protect it.  
Help us to act now for the good of future generations and ALL your creatures, not just a chosen few.**

**Help us to become partners in a new creation, founded on the covenant of your love.  
Amen.**

*(adapted from 'The Cry of the Earth')*

**Holy Spirit we need help.  
We are hurting our planetary home;  
global warming and climate change  
with millions of humans uprooted,  
and fish, flower and fauna  
facing dire extinction at our hand.**

**Holy Spirit hear us.**

**You asked us to be stewards of Your creation.  
We have failed, and so plead for your counsel.  
Show us how we can use our God given gifts to repair the harm of our greed,  
and to have the courage to stand up and fight.**

**With faith in your guidance,  
Holy Spirit help us.**

**Amen.**

*(adapted from 'Lamplighters' Forum)*

**Most High, good Lord,  
You revealed to St. Francis  
that You are the Father of all creation and  
that all creatures are related as brothers and sisters – and our brothers and sisters.**

**Praise be to You, our Lord,  
with all Your creatures,  
especially Sir Brother Sun who is the day,  
and through whom You give us light.**

**Praise be to You, our Lord,  
through Sister Moon and the stars,  
Brother Wind, Sister Water and Brother Fire.**

**And praise be to You, my Lord,  
through our Sister Mother Earth,  
who sustains and governs us,  
and gives us our fruit, our flowers, our herbs.**

**Grant us, Lord,  
the grace to see Your beauty and likeness  
in all created things – the ugly bugs and the cute,  
that we may follow St. Francis  
in giving a care for His creation.**

**Amen.**

*Adapted from an adaption by Br. Cathal Duddy from "The Canticle of the Creatures" by St. Francis of Assisi*

If the location you visit permits – ie it isn't a Local Nature Reserve or a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - encourage people to gather some natural objects to either decorate the church on your return, or to take home. Depending on how much time you have, you could go on the walk to gather things for decorating the altar, and make your whole worship about the altar.

It is advisable to do the walk yourself a couple of days in advance in order to plan the route; the timing; prayer spots; and to check for any possible hazards (tree roots, deep mud or puddles). You will also need to liaise with the church. If there are less able people in the congregation you will either need to ensure your chosen site is disabled friendly or choose another activity. It's also wise to carry out a risk assessment; there is an example in the appendix.

*Activity Four: Make an Ancestors Altar*

Remembering past relatives goes a long way back in the Christian tradition – back to the fourth century. It's an important time of year for looking back, remembering your ancestors and thinking about death and resurrection. That's what All Saints and All Souls are for.

You will need to liaise carefully with your church. This is supposed to be a celebration of past lives, and as such should be upbeat, not maudlin. However, if there are recently bereaved people, this activity may still be too raw. If there are children, you can make it fun, asking them to draw pictures of their ancestors, lost friends or lost pets as a part of the activity. In advance of your worship, invite people to bring a picture of a lost ancestor or friend, or a memorable object. Set up a table with a beautiful fabric, and an opportunity for people to light candles. Set pictures of Christ's death and His resurrection. It is important to show that for us, death is not an end but a beginning, and one cannot take place without the other.

Invite people to place their picture, drawing or item on the altar and to light a candle in memory, speaking names out loud if they feel comfortable. Suggest that people may perhaps give thanks for the lives gone before and to wish them well in God's care. Once everyone who wishes to has visited the altar, invite people to sit quietly and meditate on the lives of the people they are honouring. Then ask people to reflect on their own life over the past year; to consider how they have grown; their accomplishments; their challenges; their adventures; their travels; their learnings.

Close with this prayer:

**Loving God and creator of all, we pray to You for those we love, but see no longer.  
Grant them Your peace; let Your perpetual light shine upon them and through them;  
and in Your loving wisdom and almighty power,  
work in them the good purpose of Your perfect will; through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen**

*Adapted from The Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church USA, cited in The Book of a Thousand Prayers, Angela Ashwin*



## Section Four: Suggested Worship

*Note to Leader: this is an example of how you might construct an outdoor worship. Feel free to change it to fit your circumstances; change the activities; do them in a different order; make up your own.*

1. Opening prayer:

Corn has been gathered,  
grain has been threshed,  
herbs have been hung to dry.  
Grapes have been pressed,  
potatoes have been dug,  
beans have been shelled and canned.  
It is the harvest season,  
and food is ready for winter.  
We will eat, and we will live,  
and we will be grateful.  
Amen

2. Bible reading: Deuteronomy 16:10-14

3. Activity of your choice – each of them will take a full service.

4. Closing Prayer:

We have faith in One God, one source of all life,  
One ground of the whole earth, with all her creatures and all her flora *(pause)*  
And thus we have faith in the goodness of earth's life,  
In the innate worth of her dependents,  
In the human partnership within the life of all nature. *(pause)*  
And we have faith that in Christ we have been shown  
The special role of the human race:  
To bear God's likeness  
In working and caring for the earth, and everything on it, in it, above it  
In seeking to understand her mysteries and powers,  
In gently working with these powers, not against them,  
For the wellbeing of all children of the earth. *(pause)*  
And we have faith that God's spirit will lead us  
To sensitive closeness with earth's life,  
To that meek, unselfish and compassionate lifestyle  
By which the earth is inherited in peace,  
By which her life is transformed  
For all creatures to share justly in her bounty.  
So be it,  
Amen

*(Adapted from The Book of a Thousand Prayers, Angela Ashwin)*

## References

'The Book of a Thousand Prayers', Angela Ashwin



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## The Bible's Just a Book Nobody Reads



<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/8-reasons-we-don-t-read-the-bible.html>

### Section One: Introduction

This is a great way to provide an overview of, or introduction to, the Bible. You'd be surprised at how many people these days may have never even seen a Bible, never mind read one.

2 Tim 3:16-17 makes it clear to us as Christians just how important the Bible is. You could use the premise of this verse for introducing to non-Christians, or people unfamiliar with it, the idea of the Bible as a guide to life. Essentially, you could boil the Bible down to one sentence – be nice to each other!

As Christians we often focus on a book, or a chapter and even just a verse. This is an opportunity to view the Bible holistically.

### Section Two: Good to Know

Give yourself plenty of time to prepare in advance. Here's some Bible factoids. You could create a short quiz using these:

- There are 66 books across Old and New Testament
- There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament
- There are about 35 different "authors"
- The Old Testament was written from about 2000 years before Christ
- The New Testament covers a period of about 100 years.

There is a mix of biographical, historical, poetic and fictional books, some are annexed in the Apocrypha (until recently this was still a part of Catholic Bibles) and some have been left out all together – still a bone of contention among many.

The Bible is good for training – it tells us so in 2 Tim 3:16-17 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.'

Psalms 119 is a meditation on the law of the Lord. "Law" should not be confused with legalism. The Hebrew word *tora* means "teaching", standing for the revelation of the will of God to his people. There are 22 eight-line stanzas, almost "mini-psalms", each beginning with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. (See three examples below in Section 3 of "Suggested Worship": *He*; *Lamedh*; and *Pe*.) The "law" or "Word of God" is described using different Hebrew words such as: law; statutes; precepts; commands; decrees; word; promise; and ordinances. A visit to a Bible commentary provides more detail about the acrostic construction together with the use of the eight synonyms of the will of God, if you want to be really geeky.

### Section Three: Related Activities

#### Activity One:

Pre-prepare a very short summary of each book of the Bible on a slip of paper or card. If you're outdoors you might want to laminate these to give them more protection. Don't use more than three sentences, or too much time will be taken up reading. You can get synopses on the internet pretty easily.

Depending on the age of your group, you could suggest that each slip is a "tweet". Colour code each synopsis according to the section of the Bible where they are found – Old or New.



The Old Testament contains:

- Books of the Law
- History Books
- Wisdom/Poetry
- Prophecy

The New Testament contains:

- The Gospels and Acts
- Letters
- Revelation

Hide them around your site before your group arrives. Send groups, pairs or individuals to find all 66 slips. When found ask group to place them in order (only you have access to a Bible!) using clothes pegs to clip them to a washing line hung where easy access can be gained.



Once in order, ask the following questions:

- How did you find that? (Implication: how well do we know our Bible?)  
Take time to read aloud each book in turn and in order. Either ask an individual, or for volunteers or take it in turns to do this
- What effect has that had upon you?
- Have you gained any new insights?

The finished timeline can be left on display with permission of landowner or it can be removed to somewhere more accessible.

#### Activity Two:

In groups, pairs or individuals and using natural materials, create a picture or series of pictures, or a model/sculpture to depict a favourite or personally meaningful Bible story or scene. You could have a selection of Bible stories pre-prepared on laminated card as aide memoirs for people. Minds will often go blank if you ask people to think of a Bible story.

When people have finished their depiction, spark off a discussion with the following:

Option One: Ask what it was that motivated them to choose that story.

Option Two: Everyone visits all the others' works and picks one that speaks to them.

What did it say? Perhaps give viewer and artist some time sharing with each other on the meaning of the story for them.

There is potential to take photos with your phone/camera and upload to social media, church or circuit website. Or encourage the church to make an indoor display.



#### Section Four: Suggested Worship

##### 1. Opening Prayer:

Leader: Gracious Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Help us to hear them; read them; mark them; love them; learn, inwardly digest and ponder them; to taste them like honey; that, encouraged and supported by Your Holy Word, we may embrace and always hold fast to the joyful hope of everlasting life, which You have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

**All: Amen.**

Adapted from "An Australian Prayer Book" at

[http://www.bettergatherings.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=125&Itemid=126](http://www.bettergatherings.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=125&Itemid=126)

##### 2. Leader: as a group(s) or in pairs consider the following questions (*note to Leader: give them one at a time. People won't remember the questions if you give them all at once*):

- What is your favourite book or verse in the Bible?
- Which verse have you carried with you over the years?
- What meaning does that have for you?

##### 3. Bible reading: a scrummy Psalm of your choice. We suggest you choose one or more sections of Psalm 119 (we've included three sections of this Psalm below), but if another speaks to you more loudly, feel free to use a different one.

###### 'He'

<sup>33</sup> Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees,  
that I may follow it to the end.

<sup>34</sup> Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law  
and obey it with all my heart.

<sup>35</sup> Direct me in the path of your commands,  
for there I find delight.

<sup>36</sup> Turn my heart towards your statutes  
and not towards selfish gain.

<sup>37</sup> Turn my eyes away from worthless things;  
preserve my life according to your word.

<sup>38</sup> Fulfil your promise to your servant,  
so that you may be feared.

<sup>39</sup> Take away the disgrace I dread,  
for your laws are good.

<sup>40</sup> How I long for your precepts!  
In your righteousness preserve my life.

### 'Lamedh'

<sup>89</sup>Your word, Lord, is eternal;  
it stands firm in the heavens.  
<sup>90</sup>Your faithfulness continues through all generations;  
you established the earth, and it endures.  
<sup>91</sup>Your laws endure to this day,  
for all things serve you.  
<sup>92</sup>If your law had not been my delight,  
I would have perished in my affliction.  
<sup>93</sup>I will never forget your precepts,  
for by them you have preserved my life.  
<sup>94</sup>Save me, for I am yours;  
I have sought out your precepts.  
<sup>95</sup>The wicked are waiting to destroy me,  
but I will ponder your statutes.  
<sup>96</sup>To all perfection I see a limit,  
but your commands are boundless.

### 'Pe'

<sup>129</sup>Your statutes are wonderful;  
therefore I obey them.  
<sup>130</sup>The unfolding of your words gives light;  
it gives understanding to the simple.  
<sup>131</sup>I open my mouth and pant,  
longing for your commands.  
<sup>132</sup>Turn to me and have mercy on me,  
as you always do to those who love your name.  
<sup>133</sup>Direct my footsteps according to your word;  
let no sin rule over me.  
<sup>134</sup>Redeem me from human oppression,  
that I may obey your precepts.  
<sup>135</sup>Make your face shine on your servant  
and teach me your decrees.  
<sup>136</sup>Streams of tears flow from my eyes,  
for your law is not obeyed

4. We find Psalms at the centre of the Bible. Psalms often tell of what God has done and who He is. We too could write a Psalm or poem of praise to God.

Here is a template to assist (*note to Leader: have the template as a handout, with spaces for people to write in – see the appendix for a couple of examples*)

- Think of a way to address God and say how God is like something...
- Find another way of saying what was said in the first line...
- What from your life can you thank God for?
- Why are you thankful?
- What else can you thank God for?
- What difference does that make to the world?

Invite people to share their Psalms if they wish to.

5. We suggest you use the hymn 'From the Breaking of the Dawn', by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, Singing the Faith (StF) 156 as a responsive spoken prayer.





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## November: Abbess Hild and Obedience



Abbess Hild

'Early Western Saints' <https://pyhiinvaeltaja.wordpress.com/2009/11/30/abbess-hilda-of-whitby/>

### Section One: Introduction to Hild, Abbess of Whitby

*Note to Leader: this can be presented to your worshippers, who may not be familiar with Hild.*

Hild was a great-niece of King Edwin of Northumbria and was baptized by Paulinus at the age of 13. She became a nun 20 years later and was urged by Aidan to live out her vocation in her homeland of Northumbria. After founding a small community at Wearmouth, she succeeded Heiu as Abbess of Hartlepool, a double monastery where men and women celibates lived side by side under her rule. Eventually she founded the great monastery at Whitby, and there she was sought out for her wise counsel by ordinary folk and rulers alike. The Synod of Whitby, which took place in AD664, was an important milestone in Christian history. It was there that the discussion took place as to whether England would follow the Roman model or the Celtic model of the Christian faith.

The problem was that the two models had different Christian practices, most importantly, the way they calculated the date of Easter – a moveable feast, as it has to be a Sunday. Its precise timing is determined by the cycle of the moon, and the two contrary methods sometimes resulted in dates up to four weeks apart. Each side laid its case before Oswin the king. The Celtic tradition claimed authority from the Apostle John, the Roman from St Peter.

After protracted debate the decision was in favour of Rome. It was a landmark in the history of the church. For Hild it was a bitter defeat. But she deferred to the “winning side” and began to move her monastery toward Roman practices. For us, it is a clear example of a call to obedience. How will we behave when we find ourselves wrestling with the call of God? Let’s look at obedience through the eyes of Hild, Abbess of Whitby.

### Section Two: Good to Know

Hild’s Saints Day is on 17 November.

### Section Three: Related Activities

#### Activity One:

Both Moses and Joshua were told to cross a river. They had to display the faith that God would keep them safe and pave the way. If you are working with children and you are in a woodland, use found materials to make a “river”. If you are working with adults or you are somewhere where using found materials would be problematic (a church garden or a park) provide a long length of blue cloth. You could either buy this, or you could use an old blue duvet cover cut open to make a long length. Encourage people to make a river using the blue cloth instead.

When you have made your river, ask everyone to stand on one “bank”. Invite them to think about something either in the past or current that God is asking them to be obedient about. This might be faith or mission related, or it might be something in their life eg making amends with someone they have hurt.

Ask them to think about what God is asking, and ask them to offer their obedience to Him. When they have done this, they cross the river to the other side. Once everyone has crossed, invite them to write on the back of a pretty card their promise to God.

Bring everyone together and give them the opportunity to share if they are comfortable doing so.

### Activity Two:

Read Daniel Chapter 3:1-29

In Daniel, Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego were true to God in not renouncing their faith in favour of a statue set up by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

Set up a brazier or fire pit. Invite people to write on a piece of paper a time when they were disobedient to God and ask them to throw it onto the fire. Watch their disobedience burn in the flames just as Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego did not.



### **Section Four: Suggested Worship**

*Note to Leader: this is an example of how you might construct an outdoor service. Feel free to change it to fit your circumstances; change the activities; do them in a different order; make up your own.*

*It is suggested here that you begin with a Bible reading and prayer, carry out one or more of the activities, and use the liturgy below to close.*

1. Bible reading: Joshua 24:2-18
2. Opening Prayer:

Leader: Loving God, we pray that each of us will come to a point in our lives where we dare to ask You to reveal Your will for us. We ask that You would put us in a place of acceptance of what You reveal to us, that You will give us the courage to carry out what You ask of us. It may not be what we want, but it will surely be what we need in order to live a life fully invested in You. Help us to realise that anything You bring into our lives and anything You reveal to us is for our good, even when we can't see it or understand it. Help us to know that in years to come, we will be able to see and rejoice in Your plans for us. You have the roadmap for each of us, we do not, and must walk Your path in faith. Give us a spirit of acceptance and a heart open to Your movement in our lives. Allow us to let Your love surround us and cast out any fear or doubts. Help us to live in love with You, accept Your will for our lives and give us the proper response to Your revelation. May we trust in the way You push us to go, and take the first step.

**All: In Jesus' Name.  
Amen.**

*Adapted from [www.belief.net.com](http://www.belief.net.com)*

3. Activities (choose one or all from above).
4. Prayer (closing worship):

Leader: Spirit of the Risen Christ, as lamps light up the evening, shine into our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love.

*Candles may be lit (if you are outdoors, use LED candles)*

**All: The light of Christ has come into the world! We give You thanks that You led our forebears in the Faith through a cloud by day and a fire by night. We give You thanks, kindly Light, that the torch of faith was brought to this land, and that You ever lead Your people on. Light up our dark hearts by the light of Your Christ; may His Word illumine our way, just as You pour forth loving kindness upon Your whole creation, our source, our Saviour and Your radiant Spirit. May the Light of lights come to our dark hearts; may the Spirit's wisdom come to us from our Saviour. May the peace of the Spirit be ours this day and all days; the peace of the Son be ours this day and all days; the peace of our God be ours this day and all days; the peace of all peace be ours, each morning and evening of our lives.**

5. Read Psalm 27
6. Prayer:

Leader: We offer to You, loving and gracious Lord, the troubles of this day; we lay down our burdens at Your feet, just as Christ invites us to do. Forgive us our sins, especially when we have been disobedient and turned away from Your grace. Give us Your peace, and help us to receive Your Word.

7. Bible reading: Mark 4:35-41



8. (two speakers)

**Speaker One:** Come, let us return to God who has torn us and will heal us. Bind up our wounds and raise us up, O God. After two days You will revive us and on the third day will raise us up that we may live in Your presence. We will strive to know You, Lord, Your appearing is as sure as the sunrise. We ask that You will come to us like the showers, like the spring rains that water the earth. Bind up our wounds and raise us up, O God, and refresh our spirits.

**Speaker Two:** O, my people, how shall I deal with you? Your love for me is like the morning dew that goes fades away. That is why I have sent prophets to cut through what is false and to expose to you My light.

**Speaker One:** We know You desire integrity, not empty rituals. Help us to worship you with passion. Bind up our wounds and raise us up, O God.

9. Bible reading: Hosea 6:1-6

Leader: We give You thanks that You are always present, in all things, each day and each night. We give You thanks for your gifts of creation, life and friendship. We give You thanks for the blessings of this day.

Invite people to write out their blessings on luggage labels and hang them in the trees. If there are no trees nearby, use a prayer tree.

*Note to Leader: don't take the luggage labels down after the service, but leave them up as a reminder of all who pass, until they rot away. If you are using a public place, this is an excellent witness to others.*

10. Intercessions:

Leader: Into Your hands, O Lord, we place our families, our neighbours, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and all whom we have encountered today . . . *pause or give names.*

Enfold them in your will.

Into your hands, O Lord, we place all who are victims of prejudice, oppression or neglect; the unwanted, the frail . . . *pause or give names.*

May everyone be cherished from conception to the grave.

Into Your hands, O Lord, we place all who are restless, sick, or prey to the powers of evil . . . *pause or give names.*

Keep them in your peace.

Into Your hands, O Lord, we place members of our community, our church community, those we have never met and those in our hearts . . . *pause or give names.*

Watch over them and watch over us this day.

**All: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.**

**Amen.**

*Adapted from the evening prayer from The Lindesfarne Liturgies, [www.aidanandhilda.org.uk](http://www.aidanandhilda.org.uk).*

## References

'The Lindesfarne Liturgies', [www.aidanandhilda.org.uk](http://www.aidanandhilda.org.uk). Last accessed 07.02.18

[www.beliefnet.com](http://www.beliefnet.com). Last accessed 07.02.18



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# Praying and Worshipping with the Labyrinth: De-clutter, Devotion, Direction



## Section One: Introduction

Walking the labyrinth clears the mind and gives insight into the spiritual journey. It is a tool for meditation. It is your choice to enter the labyrinth's convoluted path, but once there, you have no choice but to go back and forth until you reach your goal.

## Section Two: Good to Know

### What is a Labyrinth?

The Labyrinth is an ancient form of walking meditation. Unlike mazes, the labyrinth offers only one path to the centre. The labyrinth serves as a metaphor for the spiritual journey/pilgrimage. It's a sacred space where we can spend time with God and focus on our life and journey in him.

'In the labyrinth you don't lose yourself, you find yourself...' Hermann Kern.

Labyrinths have been around a long time and have long been used as a Christian meditation tool. Labyrinths have existed for over 4000 years. The Christian use of the labyrinth dates back as early as 324 AD; and there is a famous one built into the floor of Chartres cathedral in France, built in the Middle Ages.

It is impossible to get lost in a labyrinth; there is only one way in and one way out.

The only choice we have is to follow it or not. The path has three stages - the inward journey, the centre and the outward journey. The theme of the inward journey is letting go of things which hinder our wholeness and inner approach to God. The centre of the Labyrinth is a space of meditative prayer and peace. The theme of the outward journey is relationship - with ourselves, with others and with the planet - seen in the light of our relationship with God.

There are no set responses or expected results; we have time and space to make our own prayers and responses to God as he meets us where we are. You need to treat everything that happens to you in the labyrinth as a metaphor for your life: sometimes walking parallel with others and sometimes in opposite directions, making space to accommodate or allow others to pass by. The important feature of this is not the destination but what we learn on the journey itself.

## Section Three: Related Activity

### Activity One:

Either use an existing labyrinth, or purchase one outlined on a "mat"; available on line, usually expensive! So why not use what you have available to make it yourself. It's a good team building exercise, and it's a great way of getting people talking about spirituality and journeying.

Natural materials such as stones or sticks or leaves or nuts are used to mark out a labyrinth. Alternative materials may be more appropriate for your group such as chalk on a path, Playdoh, Lego (using the Lego figures can add a new dimension as they walk the labyrinth), draw labyrinths on paper plates and use them as finger labyrinths



You can find loads of ideas and texts at: [www.labyrinth.org.uk/index.html](http://www.labyrinth.org.uk/index.html)



If you want to add an extra dimension, you could add parts of the Lord's Prayer throughout the labyrinth. As people walk, they stop at each station to ponder that part of the Lord's Prayer. Normally the only time a walker stops to ponder is in the middle of the labyrinth; this activity might not go down as well with those of you who are labyrinth purists! See the appendix for full instructions.

Another nice touch is to leave airdrying clay (make up small balls and put them in sealed plastic bags or it will go off) or plasticine in the middle of the labyrinth for people to make a symbol of what they have experienced while walking. Air drying clay and tubs of plasticine are both available from places like Hobbycraft.

You can walk your labyrinth either in your church garden or out in a park. It's a great witness to do in a public place, and others may want to join in – let them do so, but make sure you explain what a labyrinth is for to help eliminate children who think it's a toy, or a maze.

It may be that the labyrinth could be left in place for community use; it may be worth having a sign made up to explain to visitors what a labyrinth is and how to use it. See appendices for one that is ready-made.

#### **Section Four: Suggested Worship**

*Note to Leader: the whole of this service is bound up in the making, and walking, of the labyrinth. It really should not be rushed, so its best there is nothing else to your service beyond, perhaps, an opening and closing prayer. You can use the ones given below or substitute your own.*

##### 1. Opening prayer

Leader: Lord, we come with our busy, frantic lives,  
Our crowded thoughts, our high hopes and our greatest fears.  
We come with our grand plans, our dreams and daydreams, and our precious memories.  
We come with our ever-squeezed time, our God-given gifts and our skills, large and small.  
We come with our family, our friends and we come with ourselves.  
We come to offer you everything we have and everything we are,  
and we glorify your holy name with every fibre of our being.

**Amen**

*(Adapted from David Clowes 500 prayers for all occasions. No. 11)*

##### 2. Make and/or walk the labyrinth

##### 3. Closing prayer:

**Leader:** We came to You in weakness; but we go in Your strength.  
We came to You alone; but we go together, with You.  
We came to You in brokenness; but we go in a wholeness given by You.  
We came to You with our questions; but we go in happiness, knowing Christ is the answer.  
We came to You looking for a Saviour; but we go with You, our Lord.  
We came to You empty handed; but we go with our hearts filled with You.  
We came to You defeated, lost and full of selfishness and sin;  
but we go forgiven, found and in the victory of Christ.  
We go because Jesus sends us.  
We go because Jesus fills us.  
We go because Jesus goes with us.

**Amen.**

*(Adapted from David Clowes 500 prayers for all occasions. No. 539)*



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## Sensio Divina



*Whithorn Priory*

### **Section One: Introduction**

Lectio Divina is a Latin term, means “divine reading” and describes a way of reading the Scriptures whereby we gradually let go of our own agenda and open ourselves to what God wants to say to us. In the 12th century, a Carthusian monk called Guigo, described the stages which he saw as essential to the practice of Lectio Divina.

The first stage is lectio (reading) where we read the Word of God, slowly and reflectively so that it sinks into us. Any passage of Scripture can be used for this way of prayer but the passage should not be too long.

The second stage is meditatio (reflection) where we think about the text we have chosen and ruminate upon it so that we take from it what God wants to give us.

The third stage is oratio (response) where we leave our thinking aside and simply let our hearts speak to God. This response is inspired by our reflection on the Word of God.

The final stage of Lectio Divina is contemplatio (rest) where we let go not only of our own ideas, plans and meditations but also of our holy words and thoughts. We simply rest in the Word of God. We listen at the deepest level of our being to God who speaks within us with a still small voice. As we listen, we are gradually transformed from within. Obviously this transformation will have a profound effect on the way we actually live and the way we live is the test of the authenticity of our prayer. We must take what we read in the Word of God into our daily lives.

### **Section Two: Good to Know**

Sensio Divina has been developed using the concept of Lectio Divina as its base. Instead of basing your contemplation on a hard copy scripture from a book of the Bible, we take our cue from the book of God’s Creation. Sensio Divina takes place outside.

### **Section Three: Suggested Worship**

1. Bible Reading: Job 38:2-27, 40:10b-11
2. Explain the different stages of Sensio Divina. You will need a singing bowl to mark the end of each stage, or you can use a centring prayer app on your phone which allows you to set a time for each section and to mark the end of each with the sound of a gong. Talk people through each stage as you go along.
3. Sensio Divina:

#### Preparation Stage:

*Leader to read the bible text*

Take a number of mindful breaths and come to the present moment.

Let unnecessary tension leave the body.

During what follows, allow distractions to come and go.

Carry out the exercise with lightness and wonder and move at your own pace through the stages.

Approach and begin with humility



Sensing Stage:

*Leader to read the bible text*

Sense the overview (rather than the detail) of the Bible reading to begin with. Be inquisitive, use all your senses rather than your mind.

Notice first impressions.

Sense where you are in the present, try to get the big picture objectively without trying to thin and analyse.

Allow your mind to begin to move carefully from the overview of the Bible passage to the detail.

Take time, allow attention and fascination to rest where it wants, and savour the detail.

Allow your deeper senses to arise.

Take notice of any feelings and emotions that are evoked, and acknowledge them. But don't fall into analysis of how you are feeling. If other thoughts crowd in, acknowledge them and let them float away like a child's balloon..

Imagination Stage:

*Leader to read the bible text*

Return to the overview of the Bible passage and this time use your imagination, creativity, analysis and narrative skills.

Think about the journey you are taking in this exercise that led to this point. Think about how it might influence your future.

Imagine the wider ecosystem and the interactions between the elements.

Bring your focus back from the overview to the detail.

Imagine yourself not as observer but as participant in the text and emotions they illicit.

Take one of those feelings or thoughts or ideas into your contemplation.

Now listen with patience and open receptivity – bring your thinking to a halt.

Be aware of any dialogue that may be initiated. What is being said to you?

Spiritual Stage:

*Leader to read the bible text*

Allow God to speak and/or experience God's presence.

What is being said to you?

Let your heart speak in response.

Rest in God's presence and embrace.

Return to earlier stages if you feel so led.

*(Adapted from the Communities of the Mystic Christ)*

When you feel your group has completed all the stages, bring them 'back into the room' with your singing bowl/gong. Use a sound that is different from the one used to mark the different stages to avoid confusion.

4. Closing prayer:

**All: Blessed are You, Lord of all the Universe  
All creation declares Your glory.  
Blessed are You who created the rolling hills, the lowering crags,  
the outcrops of weathered stone;  
Who planted the bilberries, the heather and gorse.  
Blessed are You who spread far above us the ever changing sky,  
bright and blue, dark and angry.  
Blessed are you who painted the clouds and the rainbow.  
The sunshine proclaims Your warming love;  
the thunder, the lightning and the downpour Your mighty power.  
By the unending cycle of the waters, river to sea to rain,  
do You sustain creation's life.  
You cleanse and rest the Earth in winter.  
Faithfully You grant us the long-awaited spring.**

The snowdrop and the lamb show Your tenderness.  
Our hearts sour at Your beauty.  
Almighty God of greenness and birdsong,  
we praise You, with all our hearts and all our minds.  
Amen

*(Adapted from Psalm of the Dales, Fran Langridge)*

## References

Communities of the Mystic Christ [http://www.mysticchrist.co.uk/blog/post/sensio\\_divina](http://www.mysticchrist.co.uk/blog/post/sensio_divina), last accessed 09.02.18, Bruce Stanley

'Forest Church', Bruce Stanley



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# Jesus is the Light of the World



*Polonina Wetlinska, Poland  
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## Section One: Introduction

Like God at Creation brought light to darkness and confusion, so we through Christ bring light to our world.

## Section Two: Good to Know

The following Bible readings are all useful for including in your service

- ❖ Gen 1:3 and 1:14 Creation
- ❖ Isa 9:2; 6-7 Prophecy concerning Jesus light of the world coming
- ❖ John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world"
- ❖ Mark 15:33-39 darkness came over the whole land
- ❖ Matt 5:14-16 You are a light to the world
- ❖ Rev 22:5 Light in the eternal city

## Section Three: Related Activities

### Activity One:

#### *Lantern making:*

There are two ways of making lanterns; one that uses the round, wooden cases for camembert, the other uses jam jars. You can find the instructions for both of these methods in the appendices.

If you choose to use the "camembert" method, you'll need to allow two sessions, as you will need time for the glue on your lantern to dry. If you're working with a Sunday School, this activity will be ideal.

If you can't face eating lots of camembert to get enough containers for your group, you could use the jam jar idea from the chapter on Hildegard of Bingen, also included in the appendices.

### Activity Two:

Hot drinks, campfire songs and (Bible) stories around a fire pit always go down well. This could be done during the darker evenings to emphasise the light aspect of this activity. If you are feeling really adventurous, you can get your group to make simple 'damper' bread, wrap it around a stick and toast over the fire. There's a recipe in the Appendices.



This adds an extra dimension to your activity, and you could use this as an opportunity to share the story of Elijah and the woman with the flour and oil, or make it an agape meal.

Assess the risk with this; careful management is essential to minimise risk. But don't discount it just because children will be present. Firepits on legs are available on line and are useful as they don't mark the ground.

Remember that the more wood placed on the fire the longer it takes to burn down and the longer the wait for the pit to cool when all others have gone. Ensure the fire is out and dispose



of ashes very carefully. Done properly, there is no reason why a fire pit can be used safely with children of all ages as well as adults. Put a perimeter around the fire that only firetenders can cross. You can place seating around the outside of your perimeter; upended logs, or pieces of discontinued carpet from your friendly neighbourhood carpet shop. Or you could ask people to bring their own chair or stool.

#### Activity Three:

Secret messages, previously prepared using an ultra-violet pen, or key light-related verses or stories thereon, can add an air of mystery to the proceedings until a UV torch is produced allowing God to reveal His word to us. Or you can encourage people to write their own light-based quote or uplifting words using lemon juice and a cotton bud. The writing will show up if you expose the paper to heat. You could use an old fashioned light bulb for this, or the heat from the fire – be careful though!

### **Section Four: Suggested Worship**

#### 1. Opening Prayer, adapted from “Seeing Our Faith” p23 - Jesus said I am the light of the world.

The sayings are read slowly in turn by participants, after which each one lights a tea light (or a light they have made if this part of your service is placed after the lantern making activity - or LED light if you are outside) and places it in the centre of your gathering, or on your altar:

Jesus spoke to them saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’ *John 8:12*

#### **All: You are the light of the world.**

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it. *John 1:5*

#### **All: You are the light of the world.**

For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God. *John 3:20-21*

#### **All: You are the light of the world.**

Jesus said to them the light is with you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light. *John 12:35-36.*

#### **All: You are the light of the world.**

#### 2. Bible readings:

- ❖ Gen 1:3 and 1:14 Creation
- ❖ Isa 9:2; 6-7 Prophecy concerning Jesus light of the world coming
- ❖ John 8:12 Jesus said, “I am the light of the world”
- ❖ Mark 15:33-39 darkness came over the whole land
- ❖ Matt 5:14-16 You are a light to the world
- ❖ Rev 22:5 Light in the eternal city

#### 3. Adapted from <https://www.sermoncentral.com>

Leader: Light brings us sight and understanding. If you look in the dictionary, the first definition for ‘light’ is ‘something that makes vision possible’. In other words, light makes it possible for us to see. Without light, we are hopelessly blind - blind to our surroundings, blind to our situations and circumstances, blind to even ourselves. Light makes it possible for us to see clearly – things as they really are. Sometimes we might not like what we see – think about the difference between candlelight, lamplight, or the light from a strip-light.

#### **Q: How might the idea of light be similar to Jesus, as the Light of the World?**

Leader: Light Brings Life. We learn pretty early on that without sunshine there would be no life possible on earth. The sun provides the basis for all life on earth. Its the source of energy for all plants, and indirectly, for all animals. Take away the sunlight and all life on earth would soon perish. As vital is sunlight for physical life, even so the Light of the Son of God is vital for spiritual life. Think about how lethargic you become in the depth of winter, when light is at a minimum.

#### **Q: How might the light of Christ influence our spiritual life?**

Leader: Light cheers us. When there are long periods without sunshine, people get depressed. People who live in those parts of the world where the winter cold keep them indoors a lot, they suffer significantly more depression. They even have a term for it - Seasonal Affective

Disorder (SAD). People with SAD are effectively treated by using daylight bulbs or light boxes. The light mimics sunlight and decreases the brain's production of melatonin and picks up the people's spirits. Bright light cheers us.

**Q: How is Christ's light similar?**

Leader: Let's ponder the Light of the World together....

4. Activity of your choice...
5. Bring everyone together for the closing prayer:

**All:**     **Loving God,  
          Just as daylight fills the sky,  
          Fill us with Your holy light.  
          let it radiate from us, so that others may also see you.  
          May our lives mirror our love for You,  
          so that other look at us and see You.  
          You, whose wisdom has brought us into being,  
          allow your care to guide us on our way.  
          We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son  
          who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,  
          One God, for ever and ever.  
          Amen**

Adapted from <http://cathedralofsaintmatthew.com/LifeResources/Prayers/PrayersForLight.htm>

**References**

'Seeing our Faith', Janet Hodgson Canterbury Press 2011

<https://www.sermoncentral.com>, last accessed 09.02.18

<http://cathedralofsaintmatthew.com/LifeResources/Prayers/PrayersForLight.htm>, last accessed 09.02.18





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## Appendices

### List of Suppliers

Please note that the following are not recommendations. They are purely to give you an idea of where you can begin to get your supplies. Once you are a regular Forest Churcher, you will find your own suppliers.

#### Firepits

There's squillions of firepits widely available on the internet, at garden centres and in DIY stores. So many, in fact, we're not going to suggest suppliers here. You can easily find one without any trouble. You can always check out Amazon for ideas if you're scratching your head a bit. Quality is variable and the choice is subjective, based on local needs and plans, expect to pay £18 and upwards. We paid in mid-twenties and it has survived several excursions.

Here's some considerations to bear in mind:

- Sturdy and stable is essential
- Portable is good
- 1m diameter should suffice.
- Mesh tops are a great safety feature allowing some control over what goes on the fire
- Legs that fold make transport in a vehicle easier
- A removable grill enables use as a fire or as a cooker

#### Withie suppliers

As a starter for ten....

- |                            |              |                           |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| • Willow Withies.          | 01530 564645 | www.willowwithies.co.uk   |
| • Musgrove Willows.        | 01278 691105 | www.musgrovewillows.co.uk |
| • World of Willow Supplies | 07810 515413 | www.worldofwillow.co.uk   |

#### Craft Supplies

For just about everything:

- Hobbycraft, available as a retail store (usually found on retail parks rather than the High Street) and online <https://www.hobbycraft.co.uk/>
- Ryman's, available on the High Street and online <https://www.ryman.co.uk>
- The Works, available on the High Street

### Further Reading

'Forest Church', Bruce Stanley, Mystic Christ Press

'Outdoor Church', Sally Welch, The Bible Reading Fellowship

'Revelations of Divine Love', Julian of Norwich, Penguin Classics

'Through Julian's Windows', Elizabeth Ruth Obbard, Canterbury Press

'Hildegard of Bingen; An Anthology', Fiona Bowie & Oliver Davies, SPCK

'The Celtic Alternative', Shirley Toulson, Random House

'The Creative Spirit', June Boyce-Tillman, Canterbury Press

'Meditations with Hildegard of Bingen', Gabriele Uhlein Bear and Company

'Celebrating Nature', Gordon MacLellan, Capall Bann

'I Love My World', Chris Holland, Wholeland Press

### Forest Church: Useful Books

#### Outdoor Services

'Forest Church', Bruce Stanley. - A guide to nature connection for groups and individuals.

'Outdoor Church', Sally Welch. - 20 sessions to take church outside the building.

'The Holy Ground Around You', Susan Sayers.- Many reflective outdoor church services

#### Services in General

'Telling the Bible', Bob Hartman. Bible stories to read out loud.

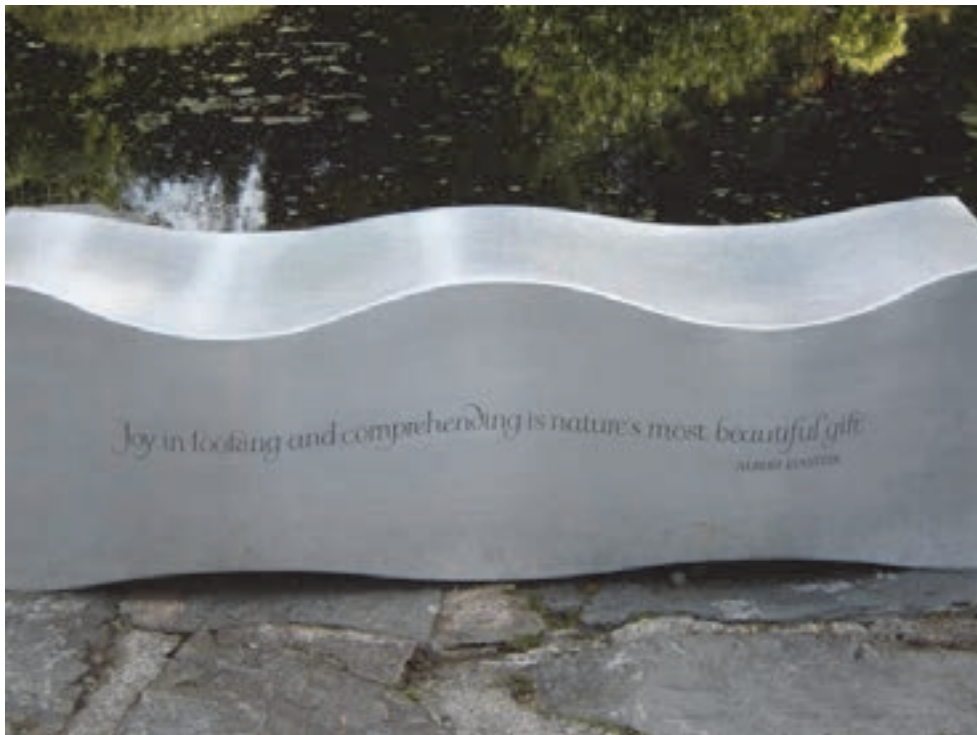
'Telling the Gospel', Bob Hartman. Bible stories to read out loud.

'Celebrating Festivals', Sally Welch. Various ideas based around 20 major church festivals.

*'All-Sorts Prayer'*, Claire Benton-Evans. Interactive prayers for all ages.  
*'500 Prayers for all Occasions'*, David Clowes.  
*'500 More Prayers for all Occasions'*, David Clowes.  
*'Messy Prayer'*, Jane Leadbetter. Includes photocopyable resources,  
*'The Lion Prayer Collection'* Editor Mary Batchelor.  
*'He Was in the World'*, John Bell. Meditations for public worship.  
*'The Bible Book, a User's Guide'*, Nick Page.  
*'The Bible Users' Manual'* published by IVP and Scripture Union  
*'Look into the Bible, a Young Person's Guide'* published by Scripture Union  
*'Waymarks for the Journey'*, Ray Simpson. Daily Celtic reading, comment and prayers.

Background

*'A Field Guide to Nature as Spiritual Practice'*, Stephen Chase.  
*'The Bumper Book of Nature'*, Stephen Moss.



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## Example Risk Assessment

Used by a Forest School in Lincolnshire (taken from

<http://www.binbrook.lincs.sch.uk/documents/%5B63226%5Drisk-assessment-benefits.pdf>)

Note: you will need to re-populate this table with your own assessment

### Forest School Risk Assessment

Significant Hazards/Risks	Level of risk	Control/Actions	Risk Benefits
Exploring the site Uneven ground, branches and trees roots on the ground. Branches and shrubs at eye level	Medium	Children well supervised, awareness talks and reminders. There will always be at least 2 members of staff both first aid trained with a First aid kit and mobile phone. Higher adult; child ratios.	Promoting physical development and awareness of the difference in surroundings. Encouraging children to be self-aware and support their peers.
Missing child A child may wander off or go missing during a Forest School session.	Low	Children told and asked to repeat boundaries and Forest school rules. Regular headcount. No access out of school grounds.	Children to realise the importance of following rules and working as a group. Building relationships and trusting each other.
Bites and stings from bees / wasps and stinging nettles.	Low	Warn not to catch bees / wasps and be aware of stinging nettles. Long trousers and closed footwear to be worn. Nettles to be cleared.	Opportunity to study how different insects move around. Displaying a positive approach to insects rather than being frightened of them.
Allergies or children's existing conditions.	Low	All staff to be aware of any known allergies or existing conditions and be aware of treatment required.	Promote knowledge and independence in identifying and avoiding allergens.
Mushrooms and fungi	Low	Ensure children do not eat anything they find and keep their hands out of their mouths and wash them thoroughly after the session. Obvious mushrooms to be cleared away.	Promote knowledge and independence in identifying and avoiding mushrooms and fungi. Identify similarities to foods bought and eaten.

### Risk Assessment Pro forma

Used by a Forest Church in North Yorkshire

Risk Assessment		Carried Out:		Review Due:	
Standard Control measures	Qualified First Aider present First Aid kit available Mobile phone available Set and inform staff and clients of emergency services rendezvous point Medical information and consent forms held for duration of activity.				
	Hazard	Risk of	Risk to	Likelihood	Potential Harm
1					
Control measures					
2					
Control measures					
3					
Control measures					
4					
Control measures					

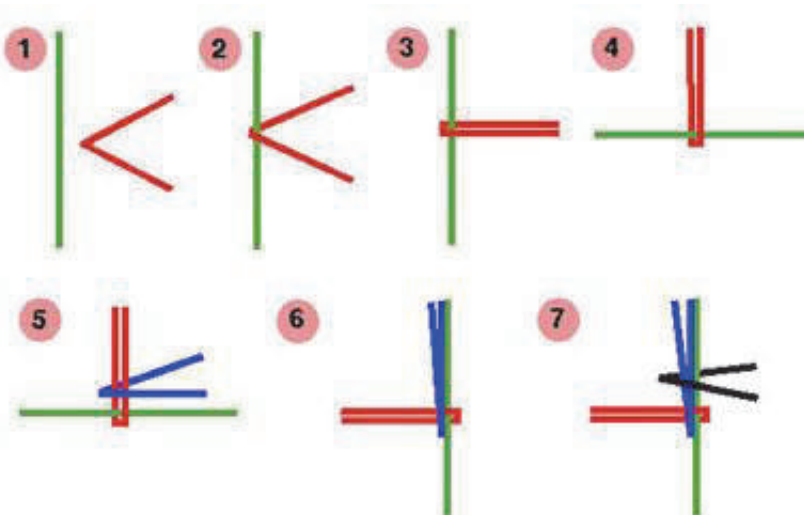
## How to Make a Brigid Cross

### You will need:

- 16 straws per person
- Four small rubber bands per person
- Decorative ribbon (optional)
- Scissors

### What to Do

1. Hold one of the reeds vertically. Fold a second reed in half as in the diagram.
2. Place the first vertical reed in the centre of the folded second reed.
3. Hold the centre overlap tightly between thumb and forefinger.
4. Turn the two rushes held together 90 degrees anti-clockwise so that the open ends of the second reed are pointing vertically upwards.
5. Fold a third reed in half and over both parts of the second reed to lie horizontally from left to right against the first straw. Hold tight.
6. Holding the centre tightly, turn the three reeds 90 degrees anti-clockwise so that the open ends of the third reed are pointing upwards.
7. Fold a new reed in half over and across all the rushes pointing upwards.
8. Repeat the process of rotating all the rushes 90 degrees anti-clockwise, adding a new folded reed each time until all rushes have been used up to make the cross.
9. Secure the arms of the cross with elastic bands. Trim the ends to make them all the same length. The St Bridget's Cross is now ready to hang.



## Honey Cake Recipe

Adapted from 'BBC Food' - [https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/honeycake\\_67599](https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/honeycake_67599)

### Ingredients: for the cake

- 170g/6oz clear honey
- 140g/5oz butter/margarine
- 85g/3oz light muscovado sugar or any other dark sugar
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 200g/7oz self raising flour, sieved

### Ingredients: for the icing

- 55g/2oz [icing sugar](#)
- 1 tbsp clear [honey](#)
- hot water

### Method

1. Preheat oven to 180C/350F/Gas 3 and butter and line the bottom of a 7in/18cm cake tin.
2. Measure the honey, butter and sugar into a large pan. Heat gently until melted.
3. Remove from the heat and mix in the eggs and flour.
4. Spoon into the cake tin and bake for 40-45 minutes until the cake is springy to the touch and shrinking slightly from the sides of the tin.. you can also check it is properly cooked by sliding a knife into the middle. If it comes out clean, it is cooked.
5. Cool slightly in the tin before turning out onto a wire rack.
6. While the cake is still warm, make the icing by mixing the sugar and honey together with 2-3 teaspoons of hot water. Trickle over the cake in whatever design takes your fancy.

## Gluten Free Honey Cake Recipe

Adapted from 'Cookie and Kate' <https://cookieandkate.com/2014/gluten-free-honey-almond-cake>

### Ingredients: for the cake

- 2 cups (8 ounces) almond flour or almond meal, firmly packed into measuring cups
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon ground cardamom
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon fine-grain sea salt
- 3 eggs, beaten
- ⅔ cup + 1 teaspoon honey, divided
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- One orange
- 6 ounces raspberries. You could experiment with other fruits if you are not keen on raspberries.

### Ingredients: for the topping

- Sprinkle of powdered sugar (optional)
- ½ cup chopped raw pistachios - or other flavoursome nut of your choice

### Method

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees Fahrenheit. Grease a 9-inch springform tin with butter and dust with almond flour/meal.
2. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the almond meal, baking powder, baking soda, cardamom, ginger and sea salt.
3. In another bowl, combine the beaten eggs, honey, olive oil and the zest of your orange. Use a whisk to mix well. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry. Stir just until there are a few clumps remaining, then gently fold in the raspberries. Pour the mixture into your prepared tin.
4. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes, until the cake is deeply golden brown and the centre is firm to the touch. A toothpick or knife inserted in the centre should come out clean. Place the cake on a wire rack to cool to room temperature.
5. Once the cake is out of the oven, slice your orange in half and squeeze out ¼ cup juice. Combine the juice with one teaspoon honey in a small saucepan. Warm over medium heat, while stirring, just until the honey is blended into the juice. Brush the orange-honey glaze over the warm cake. It should soak right in.
6. Once the cake is cool, sprinkle with powdered sugar (optional) and finish with a sprinkle of chopped pistachios.

## Seed Cake Recipe

Adapted from 'Delia Online',

<https://www.deliaonline.com/recipes/international/european/british/caraway-seed-cake>

### Ingredients: for the cake

- 175g self raising flour, sifted
- 175g spreadable butter/margarine
- 175g golden caster sugar (or any other sugar)
- 3 large eggs, beaten
- 50g ground almonds
- 4 tablespoons milk
- 3 rounded teaspoons caraway seeds

### Ingredients: for the topping

- Two level tablespoons demerara sugar, or other dark sugar
- One level tablespoon almonds, crushed a bit

### Method

1. Sift the flour into a roomy mixing bowl, lifting the sieve quite high to give the flour a good airing as it goes down, then simply add all the other ingredients.
2. Using an electric hand whisk, combine them for about one minute until you have a smooth creamy consistency.
3. Spoon the mixture into a lined and greased loaf tin. Level off the surface with the back of a spoon, then sprinkle the demerara sugar and crushed almonds all over.



4. With the oven set at 180°/Gas Mark 4, bake on a lower shelf so that the top of the tin is aligned with the centre of the oven for about 1 hour 5 minutes, or until the cake is springy in the centre.
5. Cool in the tin for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack to cool.

It's suggested this cake tastes better after a day or two, so leave it in its liner and store in a tin.

### **Gluten Free Seed Cake**

Adapted from 'Sainsbury's Magazine Online'

<https://www.sainsburysmagazine.co.uk/recipes/bread/gluten-free-caraway-seed-bread>

#### Ingredients: for the cake

- Two tbsp vegetable oil, plus extra for greasing
- 450g gluten-free white bread flour blend (see below)
- One x 7g sachet fast-action dried yeast
- Two tbsp light soft brown sugar
- Two tsp caraway seeds
- 300ml milk
- Two medium eggs
- One tsp balsamic vinegar
- One tsp caster sugar

#### Ingredients: for the flour blend

- 250g white rice flour, plus extra for kneading
- 115g potato flour
- 70g cornflour
- Four tsp xanthan gum

#### Method

1. Lightly oil a 900g (2lb) loaf tin. Make the flour blend by mixing the ingredients in a large bowl until well incorporated. Sift the flour blend, yeast and one teaspoon salt into a large bowl. Stir in the brown sugar and one teaspoon of the caraway seeds (or more, if you really like caraway seeds).
2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan until lukewarm. Add one of the eggs, the oil and the vinegar to the milk, and whisk with a fork. Make a well in the centre of the dry ingredients, add the wet ingredients, and mix well to form a dough. Knead on a lightly floured surface for five minutes until smooth.
3. Shape the dough into a fat roll and transfer to the oiled tin. Use a sharp knife to make diagonal slashes across the dough. Cover loosely with oiled clingfilm and leave in a warm place to rise for 45 minutes-1 hour or until doubled in size.
4. Preheat the oven to 200°C, fan 180°C, Gas Mark 6. To glaze, beat together the remaining egg and the caster sugar with one tsp salt, and generously brush it over the loaf, then sprinkle over the remaining caraway seeds. Bake for 30 minutes or until the loaf is risen and golden brown. Remove from the tin and bake directly on the shelf for a further 10-15 minutes to crisp the crust. Remove from the oven and leave to cool completely on a wire rack. This bread is best eaten on the day it's made.

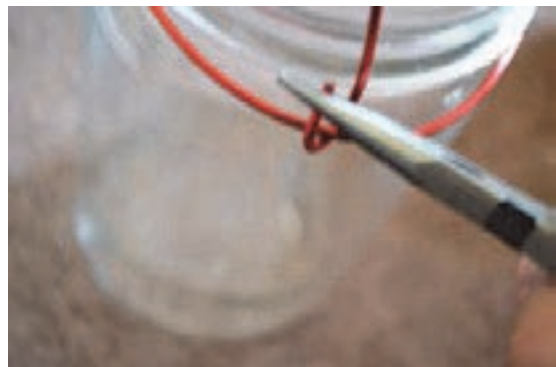
### **Psalm Template I**

- Think of a way to address God and say how God is like something...
- Find another way of saying what was said in the first line...
- What from your life can you thank God for?
- Why are you thankful?
- What else can you thank God for?
- What difference does that make to the world?

### **Psalm Template II (Roundel Pattern)**

Line	Subject
1	A: first idea
2	B: second idea
3	B: variation on second idea
4	A: another way to express line 1
5	B: another way to express line 2
6	Repeat line 1
7	Repeat line 2
8	A: use one word to express A
9	B: use one word to express B
10	B: use another single word to express B
11	Repeat line 1
12	Repeat line 2
13	Repeat line 3

## How to Make a Lantern: the jam jar method



Images taken from The Tip Garden <http://www.thetipgarden.com/2013/02/making-wire-handle-on-mason-jar.html>



## How to Make a Lantern: the Camembert method

### You will need:

- PVA glue,
- a circular cheese container, (eg Camembert or equivalent),
- LED tea light,
- Greaseproof paper
- leaves or other natural materials to decorate.

Take a strip of greaseproof paper about 20cm high and wrap it around the cheese container base, overlapping by about 3cm and cut to fit. Using leaves or other natural materials stick them to the outside of the greaseproof paper in a decorative manner. Remember too much decoration may blot out the light later.

Take the greaseproof paper and add glue to the overlap and then spread glue on the outside rim of the base. Wrap the greaseproof paper around your base and stick it all together. Pegs or an extra pair of hands may be useful. Leave to dry.

Cut out the top of the lid and using only the rim, spread glue on the inner edge and place over and stick to the top of the greaseproof paper; this strengthens the top of the greaseproof paper.

Place the LED tealight in base.



## How to Make a Labyrinth

Thought should be given to the materials to be used for the labyrinth. It may be best to sketch out your labyrinth before the day of the service. This will give you a better understanding of the task and time to resolve any challenges that may arise. Whilst at this stage you may wish to create some paper-based ones to take for use by those who may better follow a labyrinth using fingers rather than walking.

You begin with a seed pattern, the basic building block, seen at top left of the diagram on the right.

From the tip of the cross create a curved line to the tip of the vertical line to the right.

From the tip of the vertical line in the top left segment draw a curved line to the dot in the top right segment.

From the dot in the top left segment draw a curved line to the horizontal line in the top right segment.

From the horizontal line in the top left segment draw a curved line to the tip of the right arm of the cross.

Continue drawing increasingly larger curved lines as per the diagram until complete. It is simpler than it seems!

You can also visit

<https://www.wikihow.com/Draw-a-Labyrinth>

[www.labyrinth.org.uk/index.html](http://www.labyrinth.org.uk/index.html)



Come the day you will need to have either brought or identified material 'on-site' to use for the undertaking. We have used, string, sticks, rocks and fir cones and horse chestnuts to build ours. We have also used proprietary plastic bricks to create some for those who like to play and pray

## Using the Labyrinth to Explore The Lord's Prayer

Taken from 'Prayer Spaces in Schools' in accordance with its copyright policy

[https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/search/resources?name=labyrinth&theme\\_id=4&tags=0&resources\\_order=id](https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/search/resources?name=labyrinth&theme_id=4&tags=0&resources_order=id)

This prayer activity was created by Tim Abbott.. If you would like to see pictures of how the labyrinth was laid out and used, along with a plan, please visit the 'Prayer Spaces in Schools' website using the link given above.

You will need:

- Something to mark out a path, e.g.
- Tent pegs and tape on lawn.
  - Or the spray that groundsmen use to mark out football pitches,
  - Or chalk on pavement
  - Or adhesive tape
- Laminated Lord's Prayer instructions and some way to display them.

The original design used a path width of 1 metre wide, which allows students to pass and to walk round in pairs or groups if they wish. Tent pegs were hammered into the ground and plastic barrier tape was used to mark out the design. The scripts were printed out, laminated and attached to the stakes using bulldog clips.

### The Lord's Prayer

*Below is the Lord's Prayer script, which you will need to type out on six separate sheets and laminate.*

#### **1. Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.**

Think of a time when it seemed like God was near to you.

How did you feel? Thank him now.

Keeping someone's name holy is so much more than not swearing. It's about living in a way that honours that person, whether they're a mum, dad, friend or maybe the God of the whole universe. It helps us to feel closer to them.

How might you live your life in a way that's just a little closer to God?

#### **2. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.**

What do you think it would look like if earth was like heaven?

Think of one thing that would be different in the lives of those around you, or in the wider world. Pray for change.

#### **3. Give us today the food we need.**

Food, water, shelter. These things are essential to life.

Millions of people around the world struggle every day to meet these needs. What needs do we easily take for granted? Thank God for something you need every day that you don't have to worry about.

Now pray for people in the world whose basic needs aren't met, whether far away, or in our neighbourhood. How might God use you to help meet someone else's needs?

#### **4. Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.**

Was there a time this week when you said or did something you hope Jesus didn't notice? Take a moment to say sorry. What hurts are you carrying because of something someone said or did to you? Could you choose to forgive them now?

#### **5. And don't let us give in to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.**

Has there been a time when you did something even when you knew it was the wrong thing?

Is there somewhere in your life where you are struggling to do the right thing?

Ask God to guide you, and to help you make good choices.

#### **6. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.**

It all belongs to God.

What makes you aware of God's kingdom? Moments of peace or worship? Gathering with other believers?

What makes you aware of God's power? Prayers answered? Evil overcome?

What makes you aware of God's glory? The natural world, beautiful and awe inspiring? A sunset? A starry night?

Thank God for something you've seen or experienced that made you think of him.

As you leave the Labyrinth keep your eyes and ears open to all that God is doing.

And be thankful.

## The Labyrinth Explained

# Welcome to the Labyrinth

"In the labyrinth you don't lose yourself, you find yourself..."  
Hermann Kern.



A labyrinth is a sacred space where we can spend time with God and focus on our life and journey in him.

It is impossible to get lost in a labyrinth; there is only one way in and one way out.

The only choice we make is whether or not to follow it.

The path has three stages - the 'inward' journey, the centre and the 'outward' journey.

The theme of the 'inward' journey is letting go of things which hinder our wholeness and inner approach to God.

The centre of the Labyrinth is a space of meditative prayer and peace.

The theme of the 'outward' journey is relationship - with ourselves, with others and with the planet - seen in the light of our relationship with God.

There are no set responses or expected results; we have time and space to make our own prayers and responses to God as he meets us where we are.

Treat everything that happens to you in the labyrinth as a metaphor for your life.

Sometimes walking parallel with others and sometimes in opposite directions.

The important feature of this is not the destination but what we learn on the journey itself.

## 'Damper Dough' Bread Recipe: for toasting over an open fire

Makes 4 servings (snakes)

### Ingredients

- 500g self raising flour
- 75g caster sugar
- 200ml water

### Method

1. Put your flour and sugar in a bowl and mix well. Gradually add the water a little at a time and knead gently until it forms a soft dough. Divide the dough into eight equal-sized pieces.
2. Roll each piece of dough in your hands until it is a long and thin sausage shape. Wrap it around a stick and press to ensure it is well fixed in place.
3. Turning regularly, carefully hold the stick over an even heat (campfire or barbecue) for 10 minutes until hard to the touch.
4. Carefully slide the dampers off the stick and fill the cavity down the centre with chocolate spread or jam

Need sticks to cook your dampers on? You can use any long stick harvested from trees and shrubs - make sure its 'green' (this year's growth). Find sticks that are long enough to reach your fire pit from a safe distance. Strip the bark off with a sharp knife, and you're good to go.





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