

spill the beans

worship and learning resources for all ages

issue 48

pentecost 14
to reign of christ

3 september to
26 november 2023

A resource with a Scottish flavour for
Worship Leaders, Sunday Schools, Junior
Churches and Youth Leaders based on
The Women's Lectionary.

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introduction

We are delighted that you are travelling with us on a different journey for the liturgical year for 2022-23. We are excited to be doing something a bit different for this year. We are using a new lectionary to guide us through the Scripture and we have reworked how we are presenting the resources to help encourage us to think more intentionally about an intergenerational focus. We hope and pray that you will enjoy spilling the beans with us as we travel.

The Women's Lectionary

We wanted to do something a bit different having completed a second cycle of the RCL. This helps keep us, as a team, fresh and keeps the creative juices flowing. We also hope and pray that it will give others an excuse to move outside the confines of the well-established lectionaries to try something a bit different. The recent publication of new lectionaries focussing particularly on women's stories and the feminine by Wilda C Gafney and Ashley M Wilcox was inspiring.

We decided to use Ashley M Wilcox's "The Women's Lectionary: Preaching The Women Of The Bible Throughout The Year" (2021, WJK) as the basis for the year from Advent 2022 to Reign of Christ 2023. Ashley and we are excited by this partnership and where these resources will take us over the course of the next year. We would encourage you to get your own copy of Ashley Wilcox's book to benefit from her own notes on each of the Scripture texts, which will complement the resources you find in this and upcoming issues.

Intergenerational Worship

While we have had a heart for encouraging intergenerational worship over the last few years, and have regularly included ideas for intergenerational events, we want to take this a step further this year.

While in past years we have segregated material by age groups to help facilitate a more traditional pattern of worship in church life, we recognise that for more and more of us this traditional pattern is no longer the norm. We are needing to think imaginatively about how we worship as the family of God.

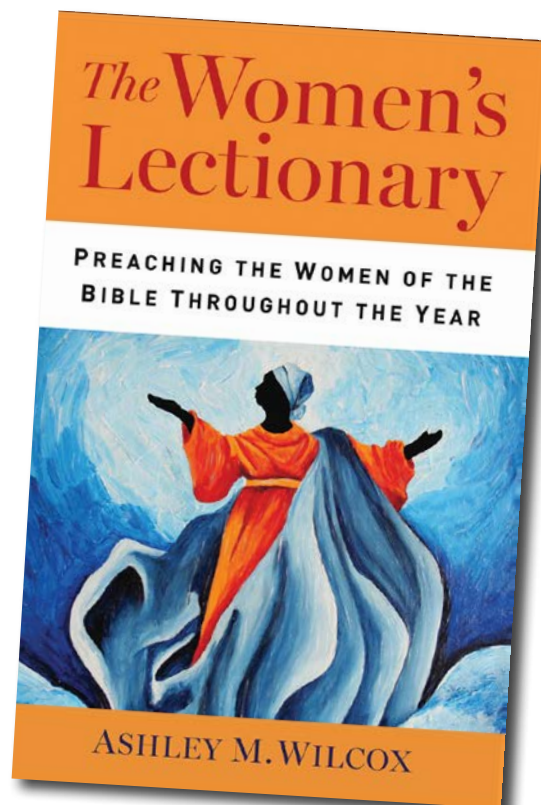
Spill the Beans has always been rooted in the power of story telling. Story binds generations together. In that shared bond of story lies the creative space for building relationships between generations. Using different ways to engage with the story recognises the variety amongst us all: some learn by listening, others by doing, others by creating. All are valuable and a part of our shared worship of God.

We are, in this year ahead, encouraging you to experiment as we will be doing with ways to worship intergenerationally in an authentic and inclusive manner. To that end we are still providing a rich variety of resources but grouped by how they help us **'tell the story'**, **'explore the story'**, and **'live the story'**. Mix and match, rewrite, contextualise for your own setting, try something different, and have fun with it! Please do give us feedback.

There are many resources online to help think more deeply about intergenerational worship. A simple but very helpful summary is provided by the Methodist Church, copied below.

Intergenerational worship IS about:

- **building relationships**—offering a key time for people to get to know each other better and build a sense of connection;
- **a time of worship and learning that is offered in a simplified and participatory way**—simple does not mean



shallow; rather it enables everyone to contribute and receive in a meaningful and appropriate way;

- **providing an inclusive experience and a sense of belonging**—helping everyone of all abilities to feel part of the body of Christ, whatever their experience;
- **being a bridge**—not only between ages but also for those who are exploring what being part of a church means. This relaxed service style can provide a comfortable place for some to discover more about Christianity;
- **encouragement, nurture and inclusiveness**—it is a means by which faith can grow and, in turn, inform life-making or life-changing decisions;
- **exploring vocation**—an opportunity to discover and develop gifts and calling.

Intergenerational worship is NOT about:

- limiting the richness of resources used;
- oversimplifying the message or adding a children's talk into the 'usual' service;
- unstructured and chaotic worship;
- children having token responsibilities for roles and participation;
- limiting potential to explore faith and discipleship together;
- nuclear families exclusively worshipping together.

Information

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Sleepless Nights Publications

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the team

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Key to Abbreviations

In the worship ideas section the following abbreviations may be used to indicate different sources of worship music:

ATAS	All the Assembly Songs You'll Ever Need
CG	Common Ground
CH4	Church Hymnary, 4th Edition
GTG	Glory To God: The Presbyterian Hymnal
JP	Junior Praise
MP	Complete Mission Praise
STF	Singing The Faith
SGP	Songs of God's People
WGP	Wild Goose Publications



word and world

New Lectionary

December 2023—November 2025

Members of the Spill the Beans Resource Team have been exploring ideas on what to do following our year with The Women's Lectionary. As we are mid-stream in both Revised Common Lectionary and Narrative Lectionary, we decided to take the opportunity to do something different.

This is our second foray into creating our own lectionary following The Path Less Travelled in 2018/19. The inspiration for this new plan was to connect the worship of the church more systematically with events that are happening around and outside the church. This includes 'national' or 'world' days, particular seasonal events and people. We are excited at the opportunity this may give us to engage with other events. Some are very serious such as International Holocaust Memorial Day, while others may inspire some fun such as National Ice Cream Day and one close to our hearts... Jelly Bean Day!



Note that we are still fine tuning this, but the following table will give you the main basis of where we are planning to journey for the two years from Advent 2023.

As always, this is invitational, and you are welcome to join us as and how is right in your own setting. We pray it is a jumping off point for your own engagement of Word and World.

Date	Liturgical	Theme	Primary Text	Support Text	Links/Notes
YEAR 1					
3 Dec 23	Advent 1	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion	Isaiah 40:1-11	Matthew 8:1-4	Abolition of Slavery (2 Dec)/Persons of Disability
10 Dec 23	Advent 2		Malachi 3:1-7	Galatians 5:13-14	Human Rights Day
17 Dec 23	Advent 3		Isaiah 16:4-5	Luke 1:5-25	International Migrant's Day (18 Dec)
24 Dec 23	Advent 4		Isaiah 9:2-7	Luke 1:39-56	
25 Dec 23	Christmas Day	Christmas	Luke 2:1-20	1 John 4:7-9,13-21	
31 Dec 23	Christmas 1		Matthew 2:1-15	Micah 5:1-5a	
7 Jan 24	Epiphany 1	Unwrapping	Luke 1:1-4	John 1:19-31	Beginnings, setting up calendars, Orthodox Christmas
14 Jan 24	Epiphany 2		Luke 4:16-30	Psalms 119:97-108	Flourishing, St Mungo
21 Jan 24	Epiphany 3		Luke 6:20-26	Psalms 1	Blessings, use "A Man's A Man" by Robert Burns
28 Jan 24	Epiphany 4		Luke 8:16-18	Jonah 1:1-17	Lighting, Up-Helly-Aa (30 Jan)
4 Feb 24	Epiphany 5		Luke 8:22-25	Psalms 139:1-12	Calming, World Cancer Day
11 Feb 24	Transfiguration		Luke 9:10-17	2 Kings 5:1-6	Feeding, International Day of Women/Girls in Science
14 Feb 24	Ash Wednesday	Social Justice	Luke 11:37-44	Isaiah 55:6-11	Valentine's Day
18 Feb 24	Lent 1		Isaiah 58:6-12	1 Samuel 21:1-6	World Day of Social Justice (20 Feb)
25 Feb 24	Lent 2		Luke 6:27-36	1 Peter 3:8-14	
3 Mar 24	Lent 3		Luke 7:1-17	Psalms 68:4-10	Whuppity Scoorie Day (1 Mar)
10 Mar 24	Lent 4		Luke 7:36-50	Micah 7:14-20	Mothering Sunday, International Women's Day (8 Mar)
17 Mar 24	Lent 5		Luke 8:26-39	Psalms 102:1-6,18-22	International Day of Happiness (20 Mar), Red Nose
24 Mar 24	Palms/Passion	Holy Week	Matthew 21:1-11	Psalms 22:1-11	
25 Mar 24	Monday		John 15:1-13	Psalms 36:5-11	The true vine
26 Mar 24	Tuesday		John 16:4b-24	Psalms 74:1-14	Work of the Spirit
27 Mar 24	Wednesday		John 17:1-11	Psalms 70	Praying for friends
28 Mar 24	Maundy Thurs		John 18:1-12	Psalms 116:1-2,12-19	Betrayal and arrest
29 Mar 24	Good Friday		John 19:1-30	Psalms 40:1-14	Jesus and Pilate
30 Mar 24	Holy Saturday		John 19:38-42	Psalms 31:1-5	Jesus' burial
31 Mar 24	Easter Day	Resurrection and New Creation	John 20:1-18	Psalms 18:16-21	Jesus and Mary in the garden
7 Apr 24	Easter 2		Isaiah 40:21-31	Matthew 6:25-34	Holy Humour Sunday, World Health Day
14 Apr 24	Easter 3		Isaiah 51:1-18	Matthew 13:24-29	National Gardening Day
21 Apr 24	Easter 4	Joy	Isaiah 61:1-11	Matthew 20:1-16	Mother Earth Day, Jelly Bean Day (both 22 Apr)
28 Apr 24	Easter 5		Psalms 30	Romans 12:9-21	International Dance Day (29 Apr), Beltane's Day (1 May)
5 May 24	Easter 6		Psalms 16	1 Peter 1:3-12	World Laughter Day, St Catherine of Siena (29 Apr)
12 May 24	Easter 7	Christian Aid	Acts 1:15-17,21-26	1 John 5:9-12	RCL readings used this week to link to Christian Aid
19 May 24	Pentecost		Acts 2:1-21	2 Samuel 6:14-19	World Baking Day (home bakes to raise money for work of Christian Aid)

Date	Liturgical	Theme	Primary Text	Support Text	Notes
26 May 24	Pentecost 1	Witness and Journey	Exodus 3:10-17	Matthew 28:16-20	
2 Jun 24	Pentecost 2		Genesis 20:1-13	Acts 21:1-6	
9 Jun 24	Pentecost 3		Exodus 34:4-8	1 Samuel 3	St Columba
16 Jun 24	Pentecost 4	Refugees and Asylum Seekers	Exodus 2:1-10	Luke 15:11-32	Father's Day
23 Jun 24	Pentecost 5		Exodus 5:1-14	1 Corinthians 4:1-13	World Refugee Day (20 Jun), International Widow's Day
30 Jun 24	Pentecost 6	Stories of Travelling	John 4:1-15,28-30,39-42	1 Kings 17:7-16	Hospitality
7 Jul 24	Pentecost 7		Matthew 15:21-28	Hebrews 13:1-3	Encounters with strangers
14 Jul 24	Pentecost 8		Leviticus 25:10-12,35-41	Galatians 3:26-28	Towards equal opportunities
21 Jul 24	Pentecost 9		Mark 2:18-28	Genesis 2:1-2	Holidays and refreshing Sabbaths, Ice Cream Day
28 Jul 24	Pentecost 10		Psalm 139:1-12,23-24	Romans 8:31-39	God with us on the journey
4 Aug 24	Pentecost 11		1 Kings 19:1-8	Mark 8:1-9	Food for the journey
11 Aug 24	Pentecost 12		Psalm 71:16-18	Ephesians 4:11-16	Journey from youth to age, Inter. Youth Day (12 Aug)
18 Aug 24	Pentecost 13	Telling Our Stories	Deuteronomy 6:20-25	John 9:13-25	World Humanitarian Day (19 Aug)
25 Aug 24	Pentecost 14		Exodus 12:21-28	Acts 26:1,9-18	
1 Sep 24	Pentecost 15		Jeremiah 29:1-14	Philippians 4:10-20	World Letter Writing Day, Amnesty International Write for Rights
8 Sep 24	Pentecost 16	Peacemaking	Leviticus 26:1-6	Matthew 5:9	World Suicide Prevention Day (10 Sep)
15 Sep 24	Pentecost 17		Psalm 34	Colossians 3:12-17	International Day of Democracy, Hildegard De Bingen (17 Sep)
22 Sep 24	Pentecost 18		John 14:25-31	Philippians 4:4-9	International Day of Peace
29 Sep 24	Pentecost 19	Environment and Harvest	Deuteronomy 16:9-15	James 2:14-26	World Heart Day, building up to Sukkot
6 Oct 24	Pentecost 20		Psalm 126	Joel 2:15-19	Restoring the environment
13 Oct 24	Pentecost 21		Exodus 16:9-16	2 Corinthians 9:6-15	World Food Day
20 Oct 24	Pentecost 22	Faith Heroes	Hebrews 12:1-2	Hebrews 11:8-22	
27 Oct 24	Pentecost 23		Hebrews 12:1-2	Hebrews 11:23-28	
3 Nov 24	Pentecost 24		Hebrews 12:1-2	Hebrews 11:29-40	All Saints Day (1 Nov), link to any local saints
10 Nov 24	Pentecost 25	Hope	Job 17:1-5,11-16	Matthew 12:9-21	Remembrance Sunday, World Kindness Day (13 Nov), St Machar, St Gerardine
17 Nov 24	Pentecost 26		Lamentations 3:19-24	Romans 8:18-25	St Margaret (16 Nov), International Student's Day
24 Nov 24	Reign of Christ		John 3:11-21	Isaiah 42:1-10a	
YEAR 2					
1 Dec 24	Advent 1	Incarnating Love	Isaiah 11:1-9	Luke 5:12-13	World AIDS Day, St Aiden of May
8 Dec 24	Advent 2		Mark 1:1-8	Isaiah 2:2-4	International Anti-Corruption Day (9 Dec)
15 Dec 24	Advent 3		Isaiah 35	Galatians 5:13-16	
22 Dec 24	Advent 4		Luke 1:26-38	1 Corinthians 13:1-13	
24/5 Dec 24	Christmas Eve/Day		Luke 1:46-55 Matthew 1:18-25	Romans 13:11-12 1 John 3-11	
29 Dec 24	Christmas 1		John 1:1-14	Isaiah 43:1-7	Donald Caskie (died 27 Dec 1983)
5 Jan 25	Christmas 2		Daniel 2:8-23	Matthew 2:1-6	Thomas Aikenhead (died 8 Jan 1697)
12 Jan 25	Epiphany 1	Holocaust Memorial	Luke 11:14-28	Nehemiah 5:1-13	Awareness of evil
19 Jan 25	Epiphany 2		Exodus 1:15-22	Mark 9:42-48	Slaughter/protection of innocents, Jane Haining
26 Jan 25	Epiphany 3		Isaiah 61:5-11	Mark 15:33-34	International Holocaust Memorial Day (27 Jan)
2 Feb 25	Epiphany 4	Rediscovering Jesus	Luke 2:41-52	Proverbs 3:1-10	Jesus the Jew, Candlemass, Groundhog Day
9 Feb 25	Epiphany 5		Matthew 13:1-3,10-17	2 Samuel 12:1-7a	Jesus the Storyteller
16 Feb 25	Epiphany 6		Luke 4:38-41	Ezekiel 34:11-16	Jesus the Healer
23 Feb 25	Epiphany 7		Mark 6:45-52	Mark 8:11-14	Jesus the Wonder Worker
2 Mar 25	Transfiguration		Matthew 16:13-20	John 20:30-31	Jesus: the Christ?



Date	Liturgical	Theme	Primary Text	Support Text	Notes
5 Mar 25	Ash Wednesday	Health and Wellbeing	Matthew 6:1-6,16-21	2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10	Wellbeing
9 Mar 25	Lent 1		Romans 12:1-8	Proverbs 16:21-24	Self Care I
16 Mar 25	Lent 2		Romans 12:9-21	Psalms 1	Self Care II
23 Mar 25	Lent 3		John 6:35-40	Proverbs 3:5-8	Food
30 Mar 25	Lent 4		Hebrews 4:1-11	Matthew 11:28-29	Rest, Mothering Sunday
6 Apr 25	Lent 5		1 Timothy 4:6-16	Isaiah 40:25-30	Health
13 Apr 25	Palm/Passion	You want it darker	Mark 11:1-11	Isaiah 52:13-53:12	The Gate
14 Apr 25	Monday		Mark 11:15-19	Isaiah 48:6-11	The Temple Courtyard
15 Apr 25	Tuesday		Mark 11:12-14,20-25	Isaiah 34:1-4	The Mount of Olives
16 Apr 25	Wednesday		Mark 14:1-11	Isaiah 61:1-4	The Home at Bethany
17 Apr 25	Maundy Thurs		Mark 14:12-16	Isaiah 53:7-12	The Upper Room, Gethsemane
18 Apr 25	Good Friday		Mark 14:43-15:41	Joel 2:1-2	The Hill, Golgotha
19 Apr 25	Holy Saturday		Mark 15:42-47	Psalms 22:27-31	The Tomb
20 Apr 25	Easter Day		Mark 16:1-8	Luke 24:13-35	The Garden (use Emmaus story for an evening service)
27 Apr 25	Easter 2	Community Wellbeing	John 21:1-14	Mark 1:16-20	Back at the Beginning I
4 May 25	Easter 3		John 21:15-21	Mark 14:66-72	Back at the Beginning II, Mental Health Awareness Week, death of David Livingstone (1 May 1873)
11 May 25	Easter 4		Acts 9:36-43	Revelation 7:9-17	Christian Aid Week
18 May 25	Easter 5	Creative Communities	Micah 6:6-8	1 Corinthians 12:4-14	The Why Behind the How
25 May 25	Easter 6		Colossians 3:12-17	Micah 6:6-8	Creative People, death of Thomas Chalmers (31 May 1847)
1 Jun 25	Easter 7		Ephesians 5:1-20	Micah 6:6-8	Creative Living
8 Jun 25	Pentecost		Galatians 5:13-26	Micah 6:6-8 Acts 2:1-13	Creative Spirit
15 Jun 25	Pentecost 1	Thankful and Grateful	Psalms 100	Romans 5:1-11	Father's Day, National Beer Day
22 Jun 25	Pentecost 2		Psalms 118	1 Thessalonians 5:12-24	International Picnic Day (18 Jun)
29 Jun 25	Pentecost 3		Psalms 145	2 Corinthians 4:7-18	Death of George MacLeod (27 Jun 1991)
6 Jul 25	Pentecost 4		1 Chronicles 16:8-36	Romans 11:33-36	Thank You Day
13 Jul 25	Pentecost 5	Crossroads of Culture and Faith	Psalms 95	Luke 2:22-32	Music, St Swithin
20 Jul 25	Pentecost 6		2 Chronicles 1:1,7-13	Luke 3:7-18	Politics, St Thenew
27 Jul 25	Pentecost 7		Exodus 31:1-11	Luke 6:43-45	Art
3 Aug 25	Pentecost 8		2 Samuel 12:1-9	Luke 9:1-6	Literature
10 Aug 25	Pentecost 9		Song of Songs 2:8-17	Luke 12:49-53	Poetry
17 Aug 25	Pentecost 10		1 Kings 4:29-34	Luke 17:11-19	Science
24 Aug 25	Pentecost 11		1 Samuel 8:1-21	Luke 20:20-26	Civic Space, death of George Matheson (28 Aug 1906)
31 Aug 25	Pentecost 12	Prayer	Jeremiah 20:7-18	1 Samuel 1:1-18	Complaint
7 Sept 25	Pentecost 13		Luke 10:1-9,17-21	1 Samuel 2:1-10	Thanksgiving
14 Sep 25	Pentecost 14		Genesis 32:3-21	Luke 18:1-18	Protection
21 Sep 25	Pentecost 15		John 17:10-26	Luke 2:36-38	Intercession
28 Sep 25	Pentecost 16		2 Samuel 12:15b-23	Psalms 98	Unanswered
5 Oct 25	Pentecost 17	Reforming Our Faith	Psalms 96:1-9	1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 14:26	Songs and Liturgy
12 Oct 25	Pentecost 18		Ecclesiastes 3:1-8	Matthew 22:34-39	Times and Priorities
19 Oct 25	Pentecost 19		Joshua 10:36-43	2 Timothy 3:14-17	Lectionaries
26 Oct 25	Pentecost 20		Exodus 3:1-10	Ephesians 3:14-20	Experiences of God, Reformation Day (31 Oct)
2 Nov 25	Pentecost 21	Christ on the Edge	Mark 12:41-44	Deuteronomy 24:17-22	All Souls Day
9 Nov 25	Pentecost 22		Matthew 5:38-44	Genesis 22:1-14	Remembrance Sunday
16 Nov 25	Pentecost 23		Luke 10:25-37	Deuteronomy 10:17-22	Home Made Bread Day (17 Nov), St Margaret of Scotland
23 Nov 25	Reign of Christ		Mark 10:17-21	Luke 12:13-21	Stir Up Day, death of James Hogg (21 Nov 1835)

Note that the double-lined breaks in the table delineate between issues.



miriam's song and dance

pentecost 14
sunday 3 september 2023

Exodus 15:1-11,20-21
Philippians 4:1-9

tell the story

Bible Notes

According to some strands of Jewish tradition, Miriam was the brave, resourceful young woman who ensured that her baby brother was found by the Pharaoh's daughter and nursed by his own mother (Exodus 2). She is the first woman to be named as a 'prophet', and the refrain attributed to her in Exodus 15:21, together with the full song (vv. 1-11) which it accompanies, is thought to be one of the oldest pieces of text in the whole of Scripture.

She is portrayed as a woman of ingenuity and courage, a respected leader in her own right, and as essential to God's plan of rescue as either of her brothers, Aaron or Moses. Her story gives us a rare, early opportunity to experience faith history from a female point of view. Or does it?

Modern feminist readers may be disappointed to hear Miriam and the other women celebrated their miraculous escape from Egypt in exactly the same way, and with just as much *schadenfreude* as Moses and the menfolk had done. There is no hint of compassion for the drowned Egyptian soldiers, for the widows and orphans still to learn of their new status or for the hundreds of war horses dismissed as collateral damage.

Despite the warning in another ancient text (Proverbs 24:17-18) not to gloat over an enemy's defeat, it is arguably completely unrealistic to expect anything other than unbridled joy on the part of people who, according to the story, had been enslaved for longer than any of them could remember, had been treated with increasing brutality and who had no hope, without divine intervention, of escaping their powerful captors, when freedom was finally theirs.

If this makes us uncomfortable, as it probably should, it may be worth remembering the initial reaction of Iraqi people when Saddam Hussein's statue was pulled down

in 2003, or Margaret Thatcher's outrage in July 1982 when Archbishop Robert Runcie, preaching at the official service of thanksgiving for the end of the Falklands war, spoke of war as 'a sign of human failure' and reminded his hearers of the 'shared anguish' of those on both sides who had lost loved ones in the recent conflict. We might usefully try to imagine how a Ukrainian person would feel if they heard that the invading Russian army had been wiped out at a stroke. Then we could ponder the enormity of Jesus' suggestion that as Christians we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44).

As well as making us think about our human response to injustice and oppression, Miriam's song of praise raises vital questions about who God is and how God operates in the world. Consistently, through Old and New Testament alike, God is portrayed as being on the side of the poor and oppressed. That is why the people of Israel were chosen in the first place (Deuteronomy 7:7), not for their strength but because of their weakness, a theme repeated in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.

Disagreement comes in as to how God expresses this 'bias to the poor'. Is God the mighty warrior of Exodus 11 who intervenes with overwhelming force on his people's behalf, or is he the peace-giver of Philippians 4, who wants his people to be known for their gentleness, forbearance and commitment to prayer?

And now one final point to ponder. If you were having to leave home in a hurry, pursued by enemy soldiers and with no means of transport other than your feet, what would you take with you and what would you leave behind? What did Miriam and the other women leave behind in order to make space for their tambourines? What does that say about the priority of worship in their lives?

Story Retelling

Victory Dance

Previously published in Pray Now (2019).

*Shooka chaka, shooka chaka,
shooka chaka, shooka chaka,
Shooka chaka, shooka chaka,
shooka chaka, shooka cha!*

See the sisters go out singing
with a tambourine a-ringing,
thanks to God they are a-bringing
with their dancing bodies swinging.

In the breeze their hair a-blowing,
joyful leaps with arms a-throwing,
like a wave their bodies flowing,
feet in rhythm, faces glowing.

See the prophetess ecstatic
after army chase traumatic
she's become a praise fanatic
making gratitude emphatic.

Hear what Miriam's expressing,
thanking God for awesome blessing,
in the hour of need, no messing,
ending years of harsh oppressing.

Now the women, celebrating
the release they were awaiting,
in their dance communicating
God's most gracious vindicating.

Highest praises that they can sing
have no better voice than dancing!
Highest praises that they can sing
have no better voice than dancing!



Discussion Starters

Through the traditions of our faith, we have offered songs to express how we feel in many different situations.

“Now Thank We All Our God” was a hymn written at the end of the pandemic 100 years ago as a song of praise for coming through the Spanish Flu, though we may look on that less generously today.

- What hymns did we use for the end of the COVID pandemic?

Songs were used for the end of war, especially for the victory of war “I Vow To Thee My Country” for example.

- What other songs have been used at the end of current conflicts?

And there are songs we sing about protest and hope such as “We Are Marching In The Light Of God”.

- Can you think of other examples?

Hand out hymn books to help find examples.

Read parts of Exodus 15:1-11,20-21. This is the song Miriam sings in victory. Play some music in the background that is stirring and march-like, then read it again using more melancholy music, and see how people respond and feel about the words.

- How do you hear these words today: the celebration of victory?
- Does it disappoint that Miriam sings a victory song like this?
- What does victory look like to the enemy?
- How can we keep our humanity in times of victory?

Looking at a music streaming service (such as Spotify, Tidal, YouTube Music, Apple Music, Amazon Music, or similar) that some worshippers might have, and between you, choose the songs you would like to hear as songs of victory. Ensure that these reflect the need to ground our humanity in our relationships with others and what victory feels like for the loser.

Take one of the big hymns that speaks with military imagery and reword it to be more compassionate, reflective of the consequences of victory on all sides.

explore the story

Engaging The Text

Over this season we will copy out the passages we use in a variety of ways, either having the whole passage in people's hands or written out by hand in the centre of the worship space. Each time we will save the passages and create a collage of them as we journey through them.

This week, print out a copy of the passage for everyone, or create a large copy to place in the centre of the worship space. When you create something for the centre, think about the size of the worship space and how it will look. A3 or even A2 or A1 might not be big enough. There is a website called Blockposters (<https://www.blockposters.com>) where you can enlarge images for free.

Having read the passage aloud in worship, invite people to read it again to themselves. If everyone has a copy, use a green pen to underline the parts that are hopeful and positive, and underline in red those that worry or are violent. If there is one large copy in the worship space, invite people to take some markers and underline the positive words in green and the difficult words in red.

This way we engage with the text critically, inviting ourselves not to just accept everything. It is difficult to hear some of our sacred words, and we find them awkward in our mouths or those of the bible's characters. This way we recognise that discomfort.

Hold on to the large print passage or one of the handheld ones and place in a space where you can begin to create a montage of the stories, we have this season.

Timbrels

You will need: paper plates (2 per person), sticky tape, scissors, stickers (colourful stickers or coloured sticky dots, music themed stickers), hole punch, narrow ribbon, dried peas, small bells.

Ask those participating to put two plates together with eating surface of the plates facing each other and to tape the edges together. Before completely closing the gap, they should put some dried peas between the plates, then close the gap with tape. Ask those taking part to decorate the plates with stickers and then to punch holes around the outside rim at regular intervals. Cut lengths of ribbon in a variety of colours and ask those participating to put ribbon through holes and tie adding bells onto a few of the ribbons. Invite people to talk about their favourite songs and their favourite 'thanksgiving' song or hymn. Relate the experiences of singing these favourite songs or hymns to the experience of Miriam and the women in the story.

Songs Of Blessing

You will need: old CDs, permanent markers, stickers, string, scissors, doweling rods or branches.

Give out CDs to those participating and ask them to decorate the CDs using stickers or by writing words of praise and thanks or drawing musical symbols. Ask those participating to thread string through the centre of the CDs and then to tie the string to the rod or branch, making a kind of wall hanging or mobile. This is most effective if the strings are varied in length. Invite people to talk about their favourite songs and their favourite 'thanksgiving' song or hymn. Relate the experiences of singing these favourite songs or hymns to the experience of Miriam and the women in the story.

Ribbons Of Praise

You will need: wide ribbon in a variety of colours, sticky tape, scissors, markers, doweling rods or garden canes.

Cut lengths of ribbon (at least 1 metre each). Ask those participating to take a length of ribbon and to write words of praise or things they are thankful for onto the ribbon, then to attach the ribbon to a rod or cane using sticky tape. Discuss what has been written on the ribbon and wave the ribbons in worship.

Cheering

Ask those taking part to discuss places and times when they have heard or participated in cheering, shouting or chanting (sports events, protest marches, concerts).

- What did that feel like?
- Did they make up the chant or slogan or were they carried along with a crowd?

Invite those taking part to make up a chant or cheer or song giving thanks for God's blessings.

Dancing

Get everyone involved in a simple dance routine such as the Hokey Cokey or the Dashing White Sergeant or follow an easy exercise routine or ask a dancer in your congregation to lead the way.

Obstacle Course

You will need: set up a simple obstacle course in your meeting space, using a blue tarpaulin/cloth to create water that folks have to cross at the end.

Let people go through the course, crossing the sea at the end, and speak about journeys people have undertaken and the challenges they had on the way before they could reach their destination.

live the story

Call To Worship

In this space,
sacred and holy,
may we have ears to hear
the song of life.

May we make space
for our questions and hopes
listening to holy words
and finding their truth.

And hear the word of God
woven into our human poetry
and meet the one who invites us
in word and act and worship.

Prayer Of Dedication

Strange God,
we bring you the gifts
that seem to be the ones you value most,
the ones you can take and use:
not our strength,
but our weakness;
not all that we know,
but all we know we still have to learn;
not our goodness,
but our willingness to change and grow;
not our full wallets,
but our empty hands and hearts,
ready to receive the treasures
that you know we need,
and that you alone can give.
Amen.

Prayer Of Adoration And Confession

Magnificent God,
we bring you our praise and thanksgiving,
as we always do and as you always deserve,
but being thankful comes more easily to us
at some times than at others.

There are those once- or twice-in-a-lifetime days,
moments of overwhelming gratitude and joy,
when the songs of praise
come tumbling from our lips,
unbidden and unedited.
If this, for us, is one of those rare and heady days,
then let our song escape through walls and rafters
for all the world to hear.

There are other days when, try as we might,
we cannot remember how it felt to be glad,
or believe that we ever will be again.
The best we can do is go through the motions
of worship, and hope, against hope,
that one-day joy will return.
If this, for us, is one of those dark and dismal days,
then hold us in the silence, and let others keep
the song going until one day we are able to join in.

Then there are the ordinary, everyday times,
when joy is tinged with sadness,
and sadness lightened by gratitude and hope.
Our faith comes with questions—big questions—
about where you are
and why, if you exist, the world is as it is,
but somewhere, deep down,
we know that you are and that you care.
Love—your love—is the air that we breathe;
it is the soil in which we grow,
and that is a song worth singing.

God of fire and fury,
God of gentleness and grace,
we bring our united song of praise,
each voice with its own distinctive tone.
In major key or minor; fast pace or slow;
exuberant praises or heartfelt laments,
may you listen and be glad,
and then, when the time is right,
give us a new song to sing.
Amen.

Prayers For Others And Ourselves

Gracious God,
 we come to you with genuine thanksgiving
 for all the many blessings of this life:
 for dangers avoided and troubles overcome;
 for relationships that are rich and fulfilling;
 for others that are tricky and troublesome,
 but worth the effort of persevering with.
 Above all, we give thanks
 for your presence with us
 in good times and bad;
 in our triumphs and our tragedies;
 in our struggling to understand your ways.

We give thanks for the stories of your people
 in the past, some of them recorded in scripture,
 some passed on from one generation to the next.
 Their knowledge, like ours, was only partial;
 they made mistakes, as we do, based on
 prejudice and fear, but they kept on going,
 and you kept faith with them,
 inviting them to learn and grow,
 to trust in your goodness,
 to follow the light, to cling to what is right,
 and so to discover your peace
 which goes beyond anything
 we can explain or understand.

Loving God,
 you invite us to bring
 all our concerns to you in prayer, and so we do,
 not in panic or desperation,
 not expecting seas to be parted and enemies destroyed,
 but with quiet confidence
 that there is nothing that you
 and we together cannot face,
 nothing that your love cannot overcome.

We pray for the church
 in these difficult and challenging times,
 made all the more difficult
 and challenging because we have forgotten
 who we are and what you have called us to be:
 not pillars of society but pilgrims and refugees;
 not thriving entrepreneurs but faithful servants,
 following the way of Christ, the servant king.

Help us to stand firm, we pray,
 but also to be flexible and willing to change.
 Where there are disagreements among us,
 may we handle them with honesty and respect.
 Calm the fear in us that leads to anger and division.
 When dark thoughts intrude,
 lift our minds to think on all the positives,
 all the reasons we have to be grateful,
 most of all for your never-failing love,
 brought near to us in Jesus Christ our Lord.
 Amen.

Reflection

The sister who protected her brother
 watching over him as he was hidden
 who was right by his side
 when he went on
 to lead the Israelites to freedom,
 who stepped boldly
 into the waters of the Red Sea
 as they parted
 and then led the other women
 in a song and a dance.
 Immortalised
 as the sister
 of Moses and Aaron.
 Miriam,
 a leader
 in her own right
 not because she was a sister
 or a wife
 or a mother
 but because she was Miriam:
 Protector,
 Prophet,
 Poet,
 Powerful woman.

Reflective Response

- Leader: I will sing to the LORD,
for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.
- All: We will sing to the LORD,
for he has triumphed differently;
not with force of arms,
but with inexorable love.**
- Leader: The LORD is my strength and my might,
and he has become my salvation.
- All: The LORD is our strength and our support,
and he has shown a better way to be.**
- Leader: This is my God, and I will praise him;
my father's God, and I will exalt him.
- All: This is our God, and we will praise him;
our parents' God, and we will exalt him.**
- Leader: The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name.
- All: God is Love, and Love is God's name.**
- Leader: Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power—
your right hand shattered the enemy.
- All: Your right hand, O LORD, gentle and strong;
you hold us by the hand
and lead us in your way.**
- Leader: You blew with your wind; the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.
- All: The wind blew, the sea covered them;
your heart sank like lead
when you saw them die.**
- Leader: Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in splendour, doing wonders?
- All: Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
The others flaunt their strength and power;
you come alongside us,
armed with love alone.**
- Leader: Sing to the LORD,
for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider, he has thrown into the sea.
- All: Sing to the LORD,
for he has triumphed differently;
not with force of arms,
but with inexorable love.**

Sending

Great are you, Lord,
and mighty in power.
You free us,
you strengthen us,
you are the source of all joy.

Great are you, Lord,
and wondrous are your deeds.
You guard us,
you guide us,
you are the source of all life.

Great are you, Lord,
and worthy of praise.
You call us,
you love us,
you are the source of all blessing:
bless us as we go,
that we, in turn, may be a blessing,
this day, and always.

Praise/Hymns

- | | |
|--|---|
| A safe stronghold our God is still | CH4 454 / MP 2 |
| Come, now is the time to worship | CH4 196 |
| Fight the good fight with all your might | CH4 517 / MP 143 |
| For the healing of the nations | CH4 706 |
| He who would valiant be | CH4 535 / MP 224 |
| Help us accept each other | SGP 41 / online at
https://hymnary.org/text/help_us_accept_each_other |
| How can I keep from singing? | CH4 565 |
| In the Lord, I'll be ever thankful | CH4 772 / MP 865 |
| Jubilate, everybody | CH4 65 / MP 394 |
| O sing a new song to the Lord | CH4 61 |
| Stand, O stand firm | <i>Many And Great</i> , WGP
<i>good as a sung response for prayers for others</i> |
| Stand up, stand up for Jesus | MP 617 |
| The strife is o'er, the battle won | CH4 412 / MP 670 |
| Thine be the glory | CH4 419 / MP 689 |
| We shall overcome | Glory To God 379 / online at
https://hymnary.org/text/we_shall_overcome_we_shall_overcome |

sampler

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