



A Season of Invitation

Resources for Worship

An occasional series from the Diocesan Worship and Liturgy Committee

A Season of Invitation arose out of research conducted by the **Back to Church Sunday** team. At its heart, what it recognises is that we need to be far more than just welcoming in our churches – we can be as welcoming as we like, but people won't come unless we *invite* them. General research suggests that if you can get someone to join a group 5 or 6 times they are likely to become committed to becoming an active part of that group. And so **A Season of Invitation** was born.

Think of 5 or 6 services between September and January: e.g. Back to Church Sunday, Harvest, All Souls' memorial service, Remembrance, Advent, Christmas... invite people to all the dates, so if they can't make one they may be able to make some of the others.

For the services themselves, make sure you do your welcome and your worship well, make it accessible, but don't make it completely unlike your regular worship – you want to encourage people to explore their faith through the regular worship at your Church. The Season of Invitation website (seasonofinvitation.co.uk) has more details and suggestions for parishes.

Back to Church Sunday

Don't like 'Back to Church' Sunday, because you don't think it applies to your local context? Don't moan about it, just do something different instead.

Think about deviating from the lectionary (if that is not your normal practice) and selecting readings which are about welcoming family home (perhaps *not* the Prodigal Son), but something about Jesus as the Good Shepherd; or Jesus welcoming his mother, Mary, and his beloved disciple, John, to be one family when they stood at the foot of his Cross; or a reading about hospitality, such as Abraham feeding three strangers, and Jesus cooking breakfast for his disciples on the beach.

Why not combine this with some actual hospitality and have a bring & share lunch or BBQ after the service?

Back to School Sunday

Why not combine *Back to Church* with *Back to School* and do a blessing of backpacks or lunch boxes? And link what we pack for school with what we pack for the Christian journey.



Harvest

Living in rural communities there are lots of great things you can do at Harvest to engage the local community, such as blessing the plough, and rural life still feels somewhat linked to the seasons. In more urban environments Harvest can be more challenging. But why not take a different focus: is there a local food & drink festival you can link Harvest with; can you make it about support of your local FoodBank and draw different hymns and readings in as a result?



Bored of the normal Harvest readings? Why not pick something which relates to the charity you're focusing on this year? E.g. Wateraid & The Wedding at Cana.

School Harvest

Looking for some Harvest Hymns suitable and enjoyed by KS1 & KS2? Consider:

Harvest Samba

(www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTdIrITIXks)

Looking for some video-based bible stories? This parable of the Sower is pretty good

(www.youtube.com/watch?v=guDeSYcwRYg)

Remembrance

This year it will have escaped no one's notice that the world is marking the centenary of the end of World War I. It's best to start co-ordinating as soon as possible with your local British Legion branch and also to local flower clubs or groups about ways to mark this.

Consider publicly screening national observances as a way to engage with what is going on across the country.

Ideas from the Church of England Website:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/church-england-world-war-one>

Also ideas from SeeRound:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/sro-1803-p1.pdf>



Picture

http://seasonofinvitation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/BTCS-2012-Kids_Idea_Jo-Edit1-280x280.jpg

If you have interesting ideas about worship in Advent, feel free to email them to us at stalbandswlc@gmail.com
We will endeavour to circulate them.

Similarly if you want more details about anything on this sheet, please email us.

To sign up to what we hope will be a regular monthly sheet on ideas for worship email us at the same address asking to be put onto the circulation list.

Marking the beginning of Advent

Why not think about beginning Advent with a special evening service such as a Blessing of the Light and thinking about how we await the second coming of Jesus, the Light of the World, as well as preparing ourselves to celebrate Christmas.

The liturgy for the Blessing of the Light before Evening Prayer in *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* could be adapted for this purpose; or for something more All-Age focused, your Christingle service could be adapted in this way.

All Souls' Memorial

Even if you don't have the tradition of praying for the departed, All Souls' at the beginning of November is a good time of year to hold a service for those who have been bereaved: the opportunity to remember those who have died, to offer a prayer of thanks for their life and to light a candle in remembrance. Consider inviting more than just your funeral families from the last year, but this is a good starting point.

You might like to consider using some funeral poetry as well as biblical readings. Mark Oakley's *Readings for Funerals* (ISBN: 978-0281071807) is a good resource. Try to choose hymns which take people on the journey from loss to hope and end with the hope of the Resurrection and Thanksgiving. If you're using a choir, try and make use of music which is particularly accessible to those unfamiliar with Church.

Poem

Some keep the Sabbath going to church
I keep it, staying at home,
With a bobolink for a chorister,
And an orchard for a dome.

Some keep Sabbath in surplice,
I, just wear my wings
And instead of tolling the bell for church,
Our little sexton sings.

God preaches, a noted clergyman,
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to heaven at last
I'm going, all along.

Emily Dickinson