Creative Family Focussed Expressions of Church... made simple

#### Introduction

As society changes, we know that many families increasingly struggle to attend church at a traditional time of 10.30am on a Sunday morning - because of sporting activities, family commitments, outings/ trips/events, shopping and other activities.

Many churches in our Diocese and across the country have found that Messy Church (a Bible Reading Fellowship resource) has provided them with an excellent way to connect with families and people of all ages in a creative act of worship. Indeed, many of these fresh expressions of church are growing and thriving, both on a Sunday and midweek. However, many churches do not have the resources necessary to run Messy Church effectively.

For these reasons we have sought to present a suggested approach to a church service which is creative, family-focused and deliverable with limited resources. The approach could be used at breakfast time, on a Sunday afternoon, or midweek after school, and we have provided some example service outlines for these different circumstances in the appendix.

#### **Questions to consider:**

- I) What do the families who are not part of your congregation do on a Sunday?
  - Where are they what things are already a fixture in their regular Sunday activities?
  - What are the barriers to these people attending church if they wanted to?
- 2) What about the families that are connected to your church what are their priorities and what are the challenges that they face as a family on Sundays?
- 3) What is your desire in exploring this model of church service?
  - Do you want to start a Fresh Expression, add a new service format to the menu of worship styles you currently offer, provide a bridge into 'normal church', engage with a new section of your community who you wouldn't otherwise connect with?
- 4) Therefore, when will you run this service?
  - What will the core elements be? Who will lead it? How will you advertise it to people?

#### Key elements to such an approach:

- Make sure people know that they can come in their sports kit, ready to go straight to the next activity happening that day, or come straight from the previous family activity they have been doing that day. 'Come as you are' is the message.
- A warm and relaxed welcome with food and refreshments. As preparing the food and tidying up can be time consuming, consider keeping the food simple: pastries, croissants, toast and sausage baps for breakfast; or a picnic-style tea with sandwiches, crisps, cakes, fruit and snacks catering for different appetites and dietary requirements.
  - Seating around tables that are larger than 'one family' so that people have the opportunity to engage with those beyond their immediate family grouping.
  - A rolling opening activity, related to the theme, that is too hard for the children to do on their own. This encourages participation rather than 'watch the kids'. A good idea can be construction based activities or ones with a low degree of competition – "look how tall/big/fast/colourful our one is!…"

- Where possible the output of this activity can be used within the short interactive talk or the prayer response.
- Worship using music: not action songs. Well-known hymns or easy-to-pick-up worship songs. Songs that adults remember from when they were young can also work well.
- A Bible reading this can be done well by all reading together from a screen, as this makes Bible reading a participatory activity. Alternatively, this can be done in small groups or families. The 'Barnabas Family Bible' (BRF) is an excellent resource for helping all ages understand and explore the Scriptures, and create environments where everyone can share and grow together as followers of Jesus Christ.
- A short summary talk that brings together group discussions and conversations, teaches and disciples adults, whilst also engaging and inspiring children. No 'shushing' or enforced participation - invite people to participate, don't 'tell'.
- A prayer response which is participatory, relevant and also serves as examples to teach children how to pray.
- Less than an hour in total make sure you do your research and find out the common time that you need to finish by, in order to allow people to get to the next activity in their day or to get home. Regularly review this by talking to the congregation – "do we need to finish five minutes earlier to make the next part of your day less stressful?"
- Always publish your finishing time and stick to it. If the next thing in people's days is getting the chil-dren to a sports club, then they need to know in advance that they will be able to get them there on time. Finishing promptly when you have said, you will ensure that people don't have to sneak out early and feel embarrassed about doing so.
- If you are running your service monthly, publicise your dates and hand people an invitation to the next service as they leave the service. Avoid simply stating that the service is held on the 'Third Sunday of the month'. No one outside the church thinks this way when planning their diary - advertise the actual dates instead.
  - End by sending people out to be Christ's ambassadors wherever they go for the rest of their day/week.

### Suggested ways to deliver this approach:

#### Breakfast Church

Lots of families struggle to attend church because Sunday mornings are filled with taking children to sporting activities. Unfortunately, these families are unlikely to join you at 10.30am and, worse still, those children who already

attend your church may stop attending if they join a sporting activity that meets on a Sunday morning. 'Breakfast Church' invites families to come to church with children dressed in their sports kit, to share breakfast together and participate in an act of worship, before being sent out into the rest of their day as Christ's ambassadors.

#### Teatime Church

In some communities, Sunday morning is a slower start to the day and families are not up and out of the house so early. In this context, it may be more appropriate to use this approach as 'Picnic Church' held at 4pm. Families can then

head home afterwards, the children having had tea, with enough time to get ready for their week ahead.

#### Soulfood

As an alternative to Sundays, this approach could be used for a midweek service at 5.30pm or 6pm. Again the children are fed tea, have fun together as a family and then head home.

Note: You could choose to run a midweek expression and call it 'Teatime Church', or an early Sunday Morning expression called 'SoulFood' or create your own name for the service whenever you run it. You are welcome to use the logo's we have developed if you wish to do so.









### **Example service outlines:**

Attached we have provided four example service outlines. Each is built around use of the 'Barnabas Family Bible' which provides a Scripture reading, commentary, set of questions, activity and prayer idea for 110 different Bible stories. Copies of the Bible itself could be provided for each table, or handouts of the key sections produced.

The service structure for this approach used in the examples is:



Time 2 Gather: A time of food and fellowship sat around group tables.



**Time 2 Listen**: Reading the Bible story and commentary sections from 'The Barnabas Family Bible'.



Time 2 Explore: Exploring the themes from the Bible story further using the activity and questions from the Barnabas Family Bible.



Time 2 Think: A time where each table grouping feeds back their discussions and what they have created through the activity.

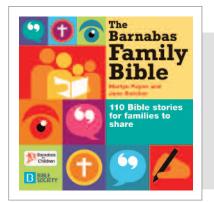


Time 2 Pray: A time of prayer using the prayer idea in the Barnabas Family Bible.



**Time 2 Worship**: A time of worship using songs people will know, or listening to/watching and reflecting on worship resources.

**Time 2 Go**: The service ends with a concluding 'GO' challenge – sending the congregation out with an action or thought to consider for the rest of their day/week.



The Barnabas Family Bible IIO Bible stories for families to share by Martyn Payne and Jane Butcher www.brfonline.org.uk/9781841017136/

Discount codes are available on purchases of 3+ copies. If interested, contact Dan Jones on the number/email below...

### **Advice and Support:**

If you would value additional advice, training, resources and support to enable you to launch a simple, creative family focused expression of church in your parish, please contact Dan Jones, Diocesan Youth and Children's Adviser on 0117 906 0100 or daniel.jones@bristoldiocese.org



| Key theme          | >> | God's promise   |
|--------------------|----|---|
| Reference          | >> | The Barnabas Family Bible (pg.18)                           |
| <b>Bible verse</b> | >> | Genesis 15:1-6 & 17:1-8                                     |
| Key verse          | >> | "I will always keep the promise I have made for you" (17:7) |
|                    |    |   |



### TIME2GATHER (20mins)

Time 2 Gather always begins with food as it creates a relaxed, friendly and vibrant atmosphere. Welcome everyone and invite them to gather around the tables. Saying 'Grace' is a great way to invite God to be at the centre of your fellowship and worship. An all-age version has been provided below. A handout is also available on the Diocese of Bristol website with a range of ideas, so try a few and see what favourites arise, or why not create your own prayer so that it can become your own way of saying 'Grace'.

#### 'Thank you' Grace



Heavenly Father, Thank you for the food before us, the family and friends beside us, and Your love that flows amongst us, In Jesus' name. Amen.



### TIME2LISTEN (5mins)

After the meal is tidied away, the leader introduces the theme, and if possible asks someone to read the Bible reading (always good to let them know beforehand). Afterwards, the leader reads out the commentary on pg.18 of the '**The Barnabas Family Bible**', which unpacks the scripture on God's special relationship with Abraham.



### TIME **2 EXPLORE** (15mins)

Each table now has time to explore the text through the questions and activity provided. Hand out copies of '**The Barnabas Family Bible**' so that everyone can see the Scripture reading, questions and the activity instructions. Alternatively provide photocopies and pens so that people can write down answers to the questions. If you have the technology to project images, put together a presentation of pictures of night skies on a loop.

TABLE QUESTIONS > How do you feel when someone breaks a promise to you?

- Why do you think Abraham felt he could believe what God promised him?
- What promises have you made recently? Have you managed to keep them?
- What sort of promises does God make and keep for each one of us every day?

TABLE ACTIVITY: Together cover a large piece of black card with stars, glitter etc. to create a beautiful, bright night sky scene. Whenever Abraham saw the stars in the sky, he remembered God's great promises to him. What promises from God can they remind you of? For example: God will always hear our prayers, and so on.



## TIME **2 THINK** (10 mins)

To conclude the explore activity, the leader facilitates a conversation using the questions for feedback from the tables. The leader can conclude by either reading the commentary again or using their own summary - check out www.worshipworkshop.org.uk for some useful ideas.



### TIME **2PRAY** (10mins)

The creative and interactive prayer suggested in the 'Barnabas Family Bible' links the theme and encourages those present to pray on their own and in their respective groups. The leader invites people to share their prayers to the wider group and closes the time of prayer. Also see the visual aid for a great prayer reminder that people can take home with them.



### TIME **2WORSHIP** (5mins)

The service concludes with a short time of worship. Depending on the group and resources available, a number of options have been suggested below which include songs for singing or listening to, and relevant videos to watch and reflect on:

#### Song suggestions to sing...

- Blessing and Honour www.youtube.com/watch?v=5m04UJ6BCrl
- Be Bold, Be Strong www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRvCUz6KFB4
- Men of Faith www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctc3GqWaV3U
- Father Abraham www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPKp4AWmQoI

#### Worship to listen to...

- When the stars burn down www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaj7YQZbvcY
- Blessed be Your name www.youtube.com/watch?v=snMhrC7IOK4

#### Worship videos to watch...

• How can I be a blessing to others? - www.youtube.com/watch?v=talH8UDjhVM



### TIME **2GO** (5mins)

God gave Abraham specific instructions and some amazing promises to hold onto. God said: "I will bless you" and the 'GO' challenge for the coming week focuses on blessing others. What can you do to be a blessing...

- Give a neighbour a bunch of flowers / box of chocolates
- Help an elderly person who needs help with their shopping
- Smile and say 'hello' to every stranger you walk past
- Send an encouraging text message to someone every day
- Buy a homeless person something to eat/drink.



#### Materials list >>

Bibles, pens, paper, large black card and craft materials for making night sky scenes e.g. glitter, stick-on stars, bright/luminous/metallic paper, felt tip pens, scissors to create stars, planets etc.

Optional: Glow-in-the-dark luminous stars for prayer activity; projecting a loop of amazing night sky images (see visual aid)



| Key theme          | >> | Jesus is alive! / The empty tomb  |
|--------------------|----|---|
| Reference          | >> | The Barnabas Family Bible (pg.198)                                      |
| <b>Bible verse</b> | >> | John 20: 11-18  |
| Key verse          | >> | "Tell my disciples that I am going to the one who is my Father" (20:17) |
|                    |    |   |



### TIME**2 GATHER** (20mins)

Welcome everyone and gather around the tables to enjoy a meal together. Saying 'Grace' is a brilliant way to invite God to be at the centre of your fellowship and worship.An all-age version has been provided below. A handout is also available on the Diocese of Bristol website with a range of ideas, so try a few and see what favourites arise, or write your own prayer so that it becomes your own way of saying 'Grace'.

#### Spider-Man Grace

- sing to Spider-Man theme tune



Saving Grace, Saving Grace Bless the food before I stuff my face. Thank the Lord, and the cooks, For the food and how good it looks. LOOK OUT! Here comes a big 'Amen'



### TIME2LISTEN (5mins)

After the meal is tidied away the leader introduces the theme, and if possible someone else reads the Bible reading (always good to let them know beforehand). Afterwards, the leader reads out the commentary on pg. 198 of the '**The Barnabas Family Bible**' which provides further information on Mary Magdalene's encounter with Jesus in the garden.



### TIME **2 EXPLORE** (15 mins)

Tables now have time to explore the text through the questions and activity provided. Hand out copies of '**The Barnabas Family Bible**' around so that every table has the Scripture reading to hand, as well as the questions and the activity instructions. Alternatively, provide photocopies and pens so that people can write down answers to the questions.

TABLE QUESTIONS • How did Mary imagine she would be able to roll the stone back from the tomb?

- Why didn't Mary recognise Jesus at first?
- > What did Mary fear might have happened to Jesus' body?
- > What helped Mary to recognise that it was Jesus?
- > Why didn't Jesus allow Mary to touch him?

TABLE ACTIVITY: Use some craft materials - air-drying clay, Play-Doh or Lego (if you prefer to minimise any mess) to create a cave scene with an entrance over which you place a round stone. Be creative and think about the content of the story and what can be added to the scene, especially what is inside the tomb.



# TIME **2 THINK** (10 mins)

Drawing the explore activity together, the leader facilitates a conversation using the questions for feedback from the tables. The leader concludes either reading the commentary again or using their own summary if they wish - check out www.worshipworkshop.org.uk for some ideas.



### TIME **2PRAY** (10mins)

The creative and interactive prayer suggested in '**The Barnabas Family Bible**' links encourages those present to pray on their own and in their respective groups. The leader invites people to share their prayers to the wider group and closes the time of prayer. In addition, give everyone a palm cross as a useful prayer reminder that can be held when they pray at home.



### TIME **2WORSHIP** (5mins)

The service concludes with a short time of worship. Depending on the group and resources available a number of options have been suggested below which include songs for singing, listening to, and relevant videos to watch and reflect on:

#### Song suggestions to sing...

- Greatest day in history www.youtube.com/watch?v=76-lg\_m-RGI
- He has risen www.youtube.com/watch?v=KReVK2bqZpk
- Lord I lift your name on high www.youtube.com/watch?v=c12Ta6\_WJrw
- O taste and see www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULzd85NbWpQ

#### Worship to listen to...

- Forever www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6duzVn5M6E
- Alive www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEvEVALLjNQ
- What a beautiful name www.youtube.com/watch?v=diQPE71YNsQ

#### Worship to watch...

- He is risen www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjT70vQMlQg
- He arose www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbS-34SIHCA



### TIME **2GO** (5mins)

The 'GO' challenge for this service is to get creative and connect with the Easter story through different mediums. Here are some examples: read all four Gospel accounts of Jesus' trial, crucifixion and resurrection; buy a new book; watch a film like the 'Miracle Maker,' or the BBC's adaptation of 'The Passion', or 'The Easter Story' video on the CBeebies website (Google it); search through various animated clips, commentaries, songs etc. on YouTube. As you watch/ listen/read, ask God to open your eyes and see afresh the wondrous story of Easter and salvation through Jesus's resurrection.



#### Materials list >>

Bibles, pens, paper, craft materials to make a tomb scene e.g. clay, Play-Doh (less messy!) Lego etc. Optional: Palm crosses, projecting a loop of pictures/paintings of the resurrection (see visual aid)



| Key theme          | >> | Are you listening?                                  |
|--------------------|----|---|
| Reference          | >> | The Barnabas Family Bible (pg.58)                   |
| <b>Bible verse</b> | >> | I Samuel 3:1-10                                     |
| Key verse          | >> | I'm listening Lord.What do you want me to do? (3:9) |
|                    |    |   |



### TIME**2 GATHER** (15mins)

Welcome everyone as they gather around the tables to sit and enjoy breakfast together. Begin saying 'Grace' which is a great way to start and a fun version has been provided below. If you prefer another idea a handout is also available on the Diocese of Bristol website with a variety of ideas for you to try. If a favourite arises, why not personalize it or create your own version so that it becomes your unique way of saying 'Grace'.

#### 'Gathering Grace'

Gracious God,



we thank You for the food before us, for the family and friends beside us, and Your love that flows amongst us. In Jesus' name. Amen.



### TIME**2 LISTEN** (5mins)

After the meal is tidied away the leader introduces the theme and asks someone to read out the Bible reading. The leader reads out the commentary on pg.59 of the 'The Barnabas Family Bible' which sets the scene of the young boy Samuel hearing the voice of God for the first time.



### TIME **2 EXPLORE** (15 mins)

After the commentary is read, hand out copies of '**The Barnabas Family Bible**' to every table so that everyone can see the Scripture reading, questions and the activity instructions. Or provide photocopies and pens so that people can write down answers to the questions.

TABLE QUESTIONS > Why do you think God chose to speak to Samuel rather than Eli?

- How do you think God speaks to people today?
- Have you ever heard God speak to you?
- Do you think that God may be speaking to us through this story?

#### TABLE ACTIVITY:

Play a listening game together. Set a minute on the timer facility of your mobile and all agree to keep completely silent for that time. Everyone should make a mental note of the sounds they hear. Then talk about what each of you heard. Try this again, but now make it a minute of listening prayer, starting with the words 'We're listening Lord...' Ask everyone to notice some of the thoughts that come into their heads. What do they think God might have been saying? (Adults, be ready, like Eli, to accept that God might choose to speak to the children rather than you).



## TIME **THINK** (10mins)

Drawing the explore activity together, the leader facilitates a conversation using the questions for feedback from the tables. The leader concludes either reading the commentary again or using their own summary if they wish (but remember to use language that is appropriate to your audience and don't make it too long!) - check out www.worshipworkshop.org.uk for ideas.



### TIME **2PRAY** (10mins)

The interactive prayer suggested on pg.59 of 'The Barnabas Family Bible' invites the group to think about people that are closest to them to those most distant. The aim is to think of those God is asking us to care for; give plenty of time so that prayers are not rushed.



### TIME **2WORSHIP** (5mins)

The service concludes with a short time of worship. Depending on the group and resources available, a number of options have been suggested below which include songs for singing, listening to and relevant videos to watch and reflect on:

#### Song suggestions to sing...

- Be still for the presence of the Lord www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwJKTdOJQ60
- I the Lord of sea and sky www.youtube.com/watch?v=4t6mz8yoocY
- Bless the Lord / 10,000 reasons www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXDGE\_1RI0E
- My Lighthouse www.youtube.com/watch?v=lFBZJGSgyVQ

#### Worship to listen to...

- Listen to the Lord www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUnk1td2sQU
- Stop! Listen to the Lord www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCoo3IP3vAc
- Be still www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7pJb49vVQY

#### Worship to watch...

- The story of Samuel www.youtube.com/watch?v=4trxvy4aq0o
- Hearing God's voice www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDl1bXKVHBo



### TIME **2GO** (5mins)

God speaking to Samuel is a great reminder that no one is too young to be important to God. The 'GO' challenge uses the 'Teaspoon Prayer' to encourage everyone to pray every time they use a spoon in the week e.g. making a cuppa, eating breakfast.

- $\mathbf{T}$  = Thank you: one thing you are thankful for
- **S** = Sorry: one thing you are sorry for
- **P** = Please: one thing you would like to ask God's help with



#### Materials list >>

Bibles, pens, paper and 'Post-it notes (preferably in the shape of a speech bubble).

Optional: a packet of plastic teaspoons to give out as a simple reminder of the 'GO' challenge.



| Key theme          | >> | Goodness, gracious me!                   |
|--------------------|----|--|
| Reference          | >> | The Barnabas Family Bible (pg.156)       |
| <b>Bible verse</b> | >> | Luke 10: 30-37 / The Good Samaritan      |
| Key verse          | >> | Jesus said:"Go and do the same!" (10:37) |
| -                  |    |  |



### TIME**2 GATHER** (15mins)

As time to gather begins with tea, as people arrive encourage them to mix at the tables. Saying 'Grace' is a great way to start your fellowship time and a fun version has been provided below. If you would like another prayer a handout is available on the Diocese of Bristol website with various examples for you to try. If a favourite arises, why not personalize it or why not create your own version so that it becomes your unique way of saying 'Grace' at Teatime Church...

#### 'Thank you' Grace



God is great. God is good Let's all say 'thank you' for this lovely food...Amen. Encourage people to say what they are looking forward to eating before saying 'Amen'



## TIME**2 LISTEN** (5mins)

After the meal is tidied away, the leader introduces the theme and asks someone to read out the Bible reading. The leader reads out the commentary on pg. 156 of the 'The Barnabas Family Bible' which provides useful information about the parable of the Good Samaritan and the fragile relationship between the Jewish and Samaritan people.



### TIME**2 EXPLORE** (15mins)

After the commentary is read, hand out copies of '**The Barnabas Family Bible**' for every table so that everyone can see the Scripture reading, questions and the activity instructions. Or provide photocopies and pens so that people can scribble down answers to the questions.

TABLE QUESTIONS If you were telling this story today, who would you choose as the enemy who turns out to be the hero?

- Can you imagine the thoughts going through the priest's head to justify his decision not to stop?
  - And what was the temple helper thinking about?
- Why do you think the Samaritan stopped to help?
- In the light of this story, who is your neighbour?

#### TABLE ACTIVITY:

As a group, work on an up-to-date version of the parable. Who is travelling and where are they going? How do they get hurt? Who are the equivalents of the priest and the temple helper - that is, the people who should help? Who is the surprise enemy who stops? How does he/she help? Try to capture in your story the same dramatic shock that Jesus' original version had. If your group is up for a challenge why not tell the story as a dramatic reading with noises and actions.



### TIME **THINK** (10 mins)

Drawing the explore activity together, the leader facilitates a conversation using the questions for feedback from the tables. The leader concludes either reading the commentary again or using their own summary if they wish (but remember to use language that is appropriate to your audience and don't make it too long!) - check out www.worshipworkshop.org.uk for ideas.



### TIME **2PRAY** (10mins)

The creative and interactive prayer idea on pg.157 of '**The Barnabas Family Bible**' links the theme and encourages everyone to think about what to pray for. To add to the prayer time, buy some 'Post-it' notes in the shape of a speech bubble and invite people to write their prayers on them and stick them all on a board/wall for everyone to see at the end.



## TIME **2WORSHIP** (5mins)

The service concludes with a short time of worship. Depending on the group and resources available, a number of options have been suggested below which include songs for singing, listening to and relevant videos to watch and reflect on:

#### Song suggestions to sing...

- God you're good to me www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzZiwHjkgOU
- Let your light shine www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXkxRNEy8XA
- This little light of mine www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKkbIZtqhyQ
- My Lighthouse www.youtube.com/watch?v=lFBZJGSgyVQ

#### Worship to listen to...

- Shine a light www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxdGBQAdpK0
- Everyone needs compassion www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnXX8TbUX-E
- Oh how I need you www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-ZpcJzGBpE

#### Worship to watch...

- Colour your world with kindness www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwelE8yyY0U
- The Good Samaritan (animated) www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaGCgWVz5LU
- Kindness matters www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GJicr8rNJw



### TIME **2GO** (5mins)

The Samaritan showed amazing compassion to someone that they would normally ignore and the 'GO' challenge is to be alert for vaious people that are in need this week, to show them God's love and compassion, and explain why you have helped them...

Remember... to be alert to what God is prompting you to do this week!



Bibles, pens, A3/A4 paper and 'Post-it notes (preferably in the shape of a speech bubble).