Intergenerational Worship

Prayers

Year A – Advent 4 Dec 18 2016 Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-25

What is this: Intergenerational Prayer Activity Stations and art observation
*NB – Each of these fours stations could be used as a whole group prayer reflection on its own.

Where it’s used: In any intergenerational gathering, but specifically Lectionary based gatherings.

Time: 10-15 minutes (depending on how many stations you want people to be able to go to

Bible Focus/theme: Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-25

What’s needed:

- Blocks
- Postcards of Ultrasound image of baby, Straw
- Small strips of white cloth ~1.5 cm wide, strong masking tape, markers
- Honey decanted into several glasses (only a small amount in each so not to be spilled. Wooden popsticks
- Chris Booth Art image ‘Milk and Honey’ displayed
- dolly pegs, blue material, flesh tones chenille stems, markers, black wool, glue, plasticene.

*Display the full text of Isaiah 7:10-16 and Matthew 1:18-25 at each station for reference.
Prayer Stations

Introduction

Our readings today remind us that the story of God’s people in the world is mixed with war and fear, suffering and injustice, the poor are exploited by the rich, even among God’s people. Kings and leaders don’t show the courage and faith that is required of their role. And yet...God’s promise and sign of being with his people keeps turning up. We see the pattern of God’s promise to the poor, judgment on the powerful, and the way children time and again are important in God’s ways of showing up, showing what is real and right.

Station 1 – Palace/city made from blocks.

7:10-12 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ‘Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.’
But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.

In the Old Testament days, when Jerusalem, the city of God’s people was under attack from two kings, King Ahaz was the leader of God’s People, but even when God spoke to him directly, he didn’t have the courage to ask God for wisdom and help. God invites us to ask him for help, for wisdom, for signposts so we know how to walk in God’s good ways. While you think and pray, build a palace and a city from the blocks. At the end of your prayers, knock the city down, but remind each other of this:

The cities and kings have all been knocked down
And their power is long gone away,
but the sign of God’s promise, the gift of the child
Is with us still today.

• Pray for the leaders in your different communities. Pray that they will have courage and faith to ask God for help to know his ways.
• Pray for ourselves to have our eyes and ears open to God’s signs and messages.
Station 2 – Postcards of Ultrasound baby image

7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

Look at the picture of the ultrasound of the Baby. This is the sign that God gives his people, to encourage them in trusting that God is with them.

The baby grows at first, unseen inside the young woman, but over time as her tummy grows bigger, it becomes clear that the baby is there. Eventually the baby is born – it’s out in the world and fully seen. God gives his people this sign so that even when it’s hard to see that God is with us, we can know that he is as real and alive as a child growing inside a mum.

In Isaiah, the prophet speaks of a baby being a sign, and the Gospel of Matthew uses the same idea. In Luke, when the shepherds are sent to find the baby, they are told that the sign to them includes the baby lying in a manger and being wrapped in simple cloths.

- Pray for people and places that find it hard to know God is present with them. Pray for them to know that ‘God is with us’- even when unseen.

As you think and pray, take a postcard.

Stick some piece of straw around the edges of the card (use strong masking tape on the reverse side of the image so that, when turned over the straw sticks our from behind the image, creating the effect of the baby on the post card lying in a manger.

Write in marker on a piece of cloth ‘God is with us’ (or prepare these ahead of time). Wrap the strip of cloth around the card a few times over the baby and stick both ends on the back.
Station 3 – Honey

7:15 He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.

Take a little bit of honey and place it on your tongue. Honey is a wild, raw food. It doesn’t grow in farms, you don’t have to plant it, or hoe the ground or water it. And you don’t need to cook it either. Honey is one of the simplest foods available, and it was associated with the poor. However it was also used as a medicine because of its goodness.

God promises that the child of a poor woman will have good, healthy simple food to eat, that no one has to work and sweat in a field to make.

- Pray for children around the world, and in your own community.
- Pray for simple nourishment for children—some children need more healthy food, and some children need less unhealthy food.
- Pray for children who are still learning what is good and what is evil—and for their protection

Station 4 - Image ‘Milk and Honey’ (and Dolly peg)

Name as many differences between the two sides of the picture as you can. The artist says, he imagines the woman on the left as in the past, and the woman on the right is offering God’s future. When you have names at least 5 differences, try turning these into prayers for people who need hope from the futures.

Sample prayers
- We pray for those whose cities have been destroyed by violence and war. We pray for the rebuilding of safe communities for them in your justice, Lord.
- We pray for those who are sad and whose lives are full of tears. We pray for them to know comfort and hope in your love, Lord.
- We pray for those whose lives are overtaken by evil. We pray for them to know your friendship, and deliverance, in your grace, Lord.

While you are thinking about the image, noticing the differences and working out your prayers, make a dolly peg replica of the women in the image.
You will need dolly pegs, blue material, flesh tones chenille stems, markers, black wool, glue, plasticene.
Draw a face on the top of the peg
Wrap and glue in place a piece of blue material over the ‘body’
Wrap a chenille stem around the ‘neck’ and bend the arms downwards into position.
Glue strands of black wool to the head
Shape a small piece of plasticene into a bowl.
Use another piece of plasticene to form a base so the figure can stand up.