Intergenerational Worship

Bible Reading

Year A – Christmas Proper 1 Dec 24/25 2016 Isaiah 9:2-7

What is this: Intergenerational Bible reading

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

Time: 5 - 7 minutes

Bible Focus/theme: Isaiah 9:2-7

What’s needed:
• Copy of the text on screen or printed for individuals
• Printed instructions for each group (see appendix)
• 6 volunteer ‘leaders’ of any age, given instructions for leading the spontaneous participation of their group.
• 6 Crepe streamers in bright colours
• Wooden sticks, less than 30cm in length, easily breakable

Introduction

In the Bible we find the Christmas stories, that tell us about Jesus’ birth in different ways – joyful, scandalous, scary, mysterious...but the Bible also holds Christmas songs and Christmas poems.
We are going to read one of the most famous poems – from a part of the Bible called the book of Isaiah. It is a poem written in a time of war and darkness and suffering and hardship. And it holds our hope by looking forward to the time a child – who we know now as Jesus - would be born who will change things back to ways of justice and peace.

Instructions for Bible Reading.

• Prepare for this by dividing your group into 6 teams.
• Each of the six groups should have a leader who is already prepared with the participation for their section and able to lead.
• Let the groups practice their role themselves, but move around the groups and check on their understanding of the task.
• Run through each of the groups in sequence as a ‘rehearsal’ – don’t let them break the sticks or throw the streamers, though.
• Finally, present the reading clearly and steadily, not rushed, with plenty of time for the groups to add and enjoy their contributions.
• If you have extra sticks and streamers, it’s worth doing a second time.
Instructions for individual groups

Section 1
Verse 2
As a group divide in half. During the reading, half of you will shout out the words beginning with D and the other half the words beginning with L. Practice calling out the words together, before the reading begins.

Is. 9:2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

Section 2
Verse 3 is about the anticipation of great joy and celebration. It’s not just a little bit of a smile, but the kind of “Whoop!!” that a crowd makes when their team wins the finals, or peace is declared after war.

There are 4 big “Hoorah” words in this verse: Joy, Rejoice, Joy, Exult. When each of these words is read, your team cheers wildly.

Is. 9:3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

Section 3
Vs 4
Give each person in your group a short (<30cm long) stick.
This verse tells the way people who have been oppressed in hard, unfair work, and have to bear heavy burdens. It uses the image of a heavy beam or yoke across their backs, as well as a slave master beating them with a stick. Each time this is mentioned – the words Yoke, Burden, Bar, Rod – bang the stick against a piece of furniture. At the word ‘Broken’ everyone in your team snaps their stick. Practice the first 4 words, but don’t break the sticks until the actual reading.

Is. 9:4 For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.
Section 4
Vs 5
Throughout this reading your group ‘marches’ on the spot (sitting down is fine if that works)
The leader of this group should get them started with ‘Left right, Left Right’ and at the end of the verse call them to halt.

*nb. This imagery is extreme and graphic. There is no need to labour the specifics of the language for very young children, who will identify for with the kinesthetic and concrete association with the marching army. For older primary aged children, unfortunately their entertainment world is already more blood-soaked than Isaiah – so we do well to allow them to experience the way the Bible stared violence in the face. In this passage, the logic of war and violence and bloodshed is declared doomed. That’s important for all ages to hear afresh.

Is. 9:5  For all the boots of the trampling warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

Section 5
Vs 6
Group makes a long ‘Shhhhh’ sound (as if quietening a room for a child to sleep)

Is. 9:6  For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Section 6
Vs 7

At the end of the phrases indicated:

• Your whole group makes large loud cheers and applause
• one person throws a coloured crepe streamer (preferable a different colour for each phrase)

His authority shall grow continually, (Cheer + throw one streamer) and there shall be endless peace (Cheer + throw one streamer) for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it (Cheer + throw one streamer) with justice and with righteousness (Cheer + throw one streamer) from this time onward and forevermore. (Cheer + throw one streamer)
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Cheer + throw one streamer)