



WHEN HE COMES TO REIGN

Further resources to celebrate Christ the Servant King
Church Without Walls 2005

Contents

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Introduction | The Church Without Walls |
| Inspiration | How to find stories from congregations about their CWW experiences: the Church Without Walls website |
| Preparation | Group prayer and reflection in preparation for the Christ the Servant King service 20th November 2005 |
| Service Outline | Suggestions for the call to worship, children's talk, readings, intercessions and hymns/songs (Susan Brown) |
| Waiting | Another shorter service outline for use during Advent or any time, theme: <i>Longing for the Kingdom of God</i> (Albert Bogle) |

Supporting Materials (available on website)

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Reflections on the Readings | Stories and ideas for the sermon (Peter Neilson) |
| Psalm 23 | A Traditional Melody |
| Videos * | <i>WAITING</i> <i>TIME PASSING</i> |

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Reflections on the Lectionary readings: Rev Peter Neilson
Producers: St Andrew's Parish Church, Bo'ness and Shoving Leopard Productions

The material on this DVD is intended for use by ministers and groups wishing to explore and celebrate the Church Without Walls. It is distributed free of charge and you may reproduce the text in whatever way you consider appropriate for use in a service or study group setting.

*There is an accompanying DVD for this Resource Pack. It is available, freely, from www.cwwresources.org.uk where you can order it online, or you can write to: SAMYP, St Andrew's Parish Church, Grahamsdyke Avenue, Bo'ness, EH51 9DT requesting a copy.

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INTRODUCTION...

Not renowned for their ability to set the heather on fire, reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland are often good solid pieces of work and weighty tomes of great theological import. Sometimes though they do stop short of reaching ‘the body of the Kirk’ — the people of God as whole.

The Report of the Special Commission on Review and Reform did, however, make it — the man, woman and even the child in the pew are now aware of the Church Without Walls. A new way of thinking, born out of that report, has been the springboard for many local congregations to explore afresh what it means to be a part of the Church of Christ in the 21st Century.

The CWW Report mentioned four principal pillars upon which it thought the Church should be built. It called for churches to be:

- Shaped by the Gospel
- Shaped by locale
- Shaped by friendship
- Shaped by the gifts of the people of God

Stopping to reflect upon these four pillars, congregations found themselves asking more questions, such as:

- *What are we doing/saying in the kind of worship we offer?*
- *How true to the Gospel imperatives, is what we do?*
- *What are those Gospel imperatives?*
- *How welcoming are we? And how understanding/accepting of others?*
- *How can we best serve the needs of the parish around us in Christ’s name?*
- *How well do we know our parish?*
- *How good are we at identifying the various gifts of the people of God?*
- *How good are we at using them?*

These questions and many others besides have led to a radical re-assessment of congregational life throughout the length and breadth of the land, with, in many instances, very exciting consequences. Read stories from these congregations online at www.churchwithoutwalls.org.uk



INSPIRATION...

While many congregations have been journeying with these issues for quite some time now, others have only just started and others again have yet to begin.

Opportunities to encourage each other as we respond to the challenge of answering Jesus' call to 'Follow me' have arisen throughout this past year. Thousands spent an incredibly full day in the Edinburgh International Conference Centre in May 2005 where we encountered all sorts of amazing ways to worship, live and share the Gospel. People gathered from all over Scotland and beyond, leaving Edinburgh burning with renewed enthusiasm for the things of the faith; inspired by the wealth and depth of imagination displayed by so many congregations in so many different situations as they attempt to worship God with every aspect of their being.

Stories from and details of regional events organised by and across Presbyteries can be found on the Church Without Walls website:

www.churchwithoutwalls.org.uk

The year began with resources sent out for congregations to use on the Sunday marking the season of Christ the King. On that same Sunday this year (Nov. 20th 2005) you are invited once more to use this new material – or to mark the day in your own way. It is the last Sunday before Advent when the Church begins again its cycle through the year. What better start to that new church year than to:

- Take the time to reflect on and rejoice in the past
- Celebrate the present
- Look forward in hope to the future!

PREPARATION...

The Church Without Walls initiative celebrates the gifts of the whole people of God, hoping to inspire those of all ages to follow Christ; to offer friendship, to identify and use their gifts. It seems appropriate therefore to suggest that local congregations appoint a group from their number to begin prayerful preparation of the service to be held on November 20th 2005. How many should be in that group will depend entirely on the resources open to you. There may well be people in the congregation who have much to contribute to the writing and preparation of such a service but who would not want to participate in the delivery of it – and there may well be those who would be happy to take part 'on the day' but who would not be comfortable helping to draft the service. In the true spirit of Church Without Walls, let your efforts be shaped by the gifts of your people of God.



OVER TO YOU...

In all you do, remember the power of prayer. Offer all your thoughts to God and look for his Spirit to guide you.

Prayer:

*Lord Jesus Christ,
In your name and in your Spirit we come.
In your name and in your Spirit we offer you this time of preparation.
In your name and in your Spirit let the glory be yours.
Guide our thoughts, O Lord.
Inspire our words and our actions.
Take from us all that might distract us
Or detract from your purposes.
Make us sensitive to your voice
And your presence
In one another...
So may all we do be pleasing in your sight
And reflect your Word
Your Light,
Your Life.
This we ask in your name and for your sake alone
You who live with the Father and the Spirit
One God, now and forever.
Amen.*

Exercise Have a look at photographic images of the Church (submitted for a recent competition) on www.cwwresources.org.uk/advent

- What are these pictures saying about the Church?
- Add to these images single words that spring to mind when you think of 'the Church' and write them down.
- If you are able, ask family or friends from both within and outwith the Church what they think of when they hear the words 'the Church'.
Ask a cross-section of ages.

How varied is the picture of the Church you now have?
How true to what the Church *should* be do you think those images are? Are they positive? Or negative?
Answer these questions honestly, from your own perspective/experience.

Do you feel there is any imbalance in people's perceptions? If there is, is there any way of helping to correct that imbalance?

Are there any messages about the Church that are not getting across to people? If there are, what are those messages? Why do you think they have failed to be conveyed?



Reflection

Jesus came that all might have life and have life everlasting.

This is the truth that, as his body the Church, we are asked to live and share. We need to concentrate on two things:

- Following (that is growing and developing in our faith both as individuals and together as a community of God's people)
- Friendship (that is creating links with those around us in our congregation and beyond that congregation, locally and worldwide)

These two activities cannot be separated. Neither should one be given a higher priority than the other. They go hand in hand.

Faith and action. Faith in action.

There is a very old story told of two ministers out in the middle of a loch doing some fishing. A local ghillie is with them. The two fall to talking about things theological. The one minister feels that all that should matter to the Christian is the individual's spiritual life — the life of prayer and devotion to reading the Word of God. All else, he says, should be secondary to that. The other minister disagrees. He feels that faith should be something that throws people into the heart of the world with sleeves rolled up and hands getting dirty.

The argument rages for quite sometime before the two realise that instead of heading for fishier waters, their boat is going round in circles. Their ghillie had only the one oar in the water. The other was in the boat. They asked him why. He took the oar out of the water and let them read what was carved on it. It said 'faith'. The other oar, not used, had 'action' carved on it. "The one without the other, has you going round in circles", he said.

Questions

Thinking of your own journey in the faith:

- What or who in the past encouraged you along the way?
- What or who keeps you on that journey now?
- How are you able to encourage others?
- How might you help encourage those who have not yet even thought of starting on that journey?



THE READINGS

Psalm 100

Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24

Ephesians 1:15–23

Matthew 25:31–46

In the Gospel parable the problem lies with those who don't see what's right in front of them. "When, Lord?" they ask, "When did we see you...?"

The consequences of their inaction were quite stark. In Jesus' day there were no social services to step in and help those who were on the streets. The hungry simply starved to death. The lonely stayed friendless. The homeless died wherever they lay down. The sick continued to suffer. The imprisoned got no help, the naked remained naked...

The message this parable carries is that not seeing is inexcusable.

The greatest incentive to making us open our eyes has to be Jesus' words: "Whatever you did for the least of these, you did to me".

Questions

Are there people your congregation finds it difficult to notice? Difficult to make room for? Difficult to know what to do for or with?

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume and scale of the needs of those around us — especially if ours is a small and ageing congregation. But the chances are that while we could undoubtedly do more we may already have done more than just a little to help others.

List ways in which your congregation has actively participated in efforts to help:

- The poor
- The homeless
- The sick
- The imprisoned

both at home and abroad...

(Include local initiatives for Christian Aid, Fair Trade, the Jubilee Campaign, Macmillan Nurses, local hospices and care homes, other responses to crises, as well as projects adopted by your congregation from time to time.)

- Are there ways you can think of to help develop and expand this work?
- Is there one area where you feel your congregation should be doing something and is not at present?
- How is the congregation's concern for all those listed above reflected in the worship it offers?



In just one sentence, try to create a mission statement for your congregation. Prayerfully considering this statement, set three goals for your church to focus on: one for the coming year; one to work on over two years and a third to work on over five years.

And finally Now go home to sleep on all you have talked about, agreeing to come together again to think about the service itself.

*May God's blessing be upon us,
May his hand guide and hold us,
May his love overshadow and protect us
And grow between us
And may his Spirit fill and inspire us
To love and glorify his name
Now and always.
Amen.*

When He Comes To Reign



Call to Worship

SERVICE OUTLINE

THE WORSHIP

Either:

Leader
All

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth,
Serve the Lord with gladness:
Come before him with joyful songs.
Know that the Lord is God
It is he who made us and we are his:
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving
And his courts with praise;
Give thanks to him and praise his name.
For the Lord is good and his love endures for ever
His faithfulness continues through all generations.
(Psalm 100, New International Version)

Or:

Leader
All

We are one body
with one Lord who is God and Lord of all.
We meet now in his presence
To praise him as we ought
Our Christ the servant King
Who came to live and love
And who calls us to follow in life and love
To Him be all praise
In the Church and in the world.
Now and for ever. Amen.

Prayer Leader

Powerful God, Creator, Father
we come before you.
We bring praise and joyful songs,
We bring open hearts and willing minds,
We bring offerings of thankfulness and gratitude.

Jesus Christ, Saviour, friend,
You have accepted us as we are:
sinful, broken, fallen, but sincere.
You have lifted us from the dark places
into the light.
You have given us the promise of everlasting life.
And you walk with us, you talk with us
and you live in us.

When He Comes To Reign



*Holy Spirit, ever-present, companion.
Since the beginning of creation
you bring us energy, vitality, reassurance and peace.
With your peace every day, we can lay yesterday to rest
With your power every day, we can face the trials of the moment
With your insight every day, we can make our plans for
tomorrow.*

*Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Three, yet one.
Who gives life, love and peace,
Freely, to all.
We worship, love and enjoy you,
Now, and always.
Amen.*

Children's Talk (idea)

Both of these suggestions make use of a ball of wool. (The writer is not on commission from any wool company!)

- (a) Cut wool into strands of different lengths and hand them out to people in the congregation (both children and adults). Give long pieces to tall people, shorter pieces to shorter (the lengths should be no shorter than about one foot or twenty centimetres - however, read on!) If you can vary the colours then use them too to say something about the recipients (red for warmth of personality, yellow for a sunny nature etc).
Keep one of the longer pieces and announce that you're going to use it for a tug of war — how far you take this announcement is up to you!
Ask the people what will happen in the tug: the wool will break.
Take back the pieces of wool you've handed out and twist them together.
Then get two people to pull on them. They shouldn't break.
Talk about how together in Christ we're made strong. The Church is for the building up of the body of Christ...
- (b) Ask (both adults and children) questions relating to what they might have in common. For example, those who are in the same class at school; those who work in a shop; those who have brown eyes; those who like reading; watching Coronation Street; or those who like a certain kind of music etc. Use the wool to link up all those who raise their hands. By the end of a few questions you should have the makings of a web!
This illustration shows the many ways we're connected to one another. The greatest connection though is the love of God binding everyone together and leaving no one out.
(You can go on to expand this and call for people to use their connections to share God's love — especially with those outside the church).



Readings

Psalm 100 (if not used in the call to worship)

Ezekiel 34: 11–16, 20–24

Ephesians 1: 15–23

Matthew 25: 31–46

The number you have is up to you — whatever suits the local congregation and situation best. Try reading using more than one voice and from unusual places (i.e. not just from the lecturn). Look at different translations.

Sermon

(Refer to the Lectionary readings and the reflections on them in the next section).

- (a) Notice it was the little things people did for others that Jesus commended. It's all the individual raindrops that eventually create an ocean.
- (b) How do we put our faith into action as individuals and as a community of faith?
- (c) We're called to be God's sheep in the world, loving and serving the Shepherd. How good are we at recognising the needs of the people around us? And how good are we at responding to them?
- (d) What about the world beyond our own community? How well does our faith in action travel?

Alternatively, perhaps you might like to use the following monologue as a sermon narrative. You can do it 'live' or pre-record it and project it. The latter has the advantage of giving time for editing and re-doing... The direct quotes are from 'The Message' by Eugene Peterson.

What a sight!

In a blaze of glory! That's how he came! In an absolute blaze of glory!

He took his seat before us and in the brightness and drama of the moment, silence fell like a blanket smothering the excited conversation...

Not a sound...

Not a movement...

Not a breath...

All eyes focused on him - every ear straining to hear what he had to say.

We'd been gathered together for a little while. Some of us coming in from the right, others from the left and we stayed on our respective sides like the fans of two opposing teams in a football stadium – although, it has to be said, there was no sense of competition at all, just a shared curiosity...

There were a few who'd managed to get into the wrong place but they sorted themselves out and were shepherded back to where they were meant to be. To be honest we'd no idea what the criteria were for standing where we were, we simply went where we were directed.

And then waited...



When He Comes To Reign

Then that amazing arrival – trumpets, fanfares, the works!

When eventually he spoke, it was ever so quietly...

Ever so gently...

But with such authority it left a shiver running up and down my spine - and I wasn't alone in feeling like that!

He addressed all those on his right hand side first.

“Enter you who are blessed by my father”, he said, “Take what’s coming to you in this kingdom. It’s been ready for you since the world’s foundation.

And here’s why:

I was hungry and you fed me,
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,
I was homeless and you gave me a room,
I was shivering and you gave me clothes,
I was sick and you stopped to visit,
I was in prison and you came to me.”

Those on his right hand just looked at one another, completely bemused.

“What?” they said “When? Where? You, Lord? We didn’t see you, did we?”

“Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me – you did it to me.” That’s what he said. And still those on his right looked confused and the babble of their questioning got louder and louder.

Then he turned to those on his left. Many of them had already started shifting nervously as if they’d followed Jesus’ drift and begun to realise what was coming.

“And you...” he said to those on the left, the sadness in his eyes giving away what was to come, “just get out. You’re good for nothing but the fires of hell!”

The gasps of disbelief turned to wails of anguish.

“But why, Lord? Why? What have we done?”

And he told them.

He told them *exactly* what they’d done.

Nothing.

He told them he’d been hungry and they’d given him no food; he’d been thirsty and they hadn’t given him even a sip of water; he’d been homeless and they hadn’t offered him a bed for the night, he’d shivered and they hadn’t given him any clothes; he’d been sick and in prison and the thought of visiting hadn’t ever crossed their minds...

“But when, Lord? When did we fail you like that?” And you can guess what he said, can’t you?

“I’m telling you the solemn truth: whenever you failed to do one of these things to someone who was being overlooked or ignored, that was me – you failed to do it to me.”

The group on the right had grown silent again as they listened to what was happening and the group on the left gave in to despair. We had been separated out as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats...

(Pause)



When He Comes To Reign

I only wish I'd known it was him.

I wish I'd known.

But you just don't think, do you? That person you pass on the street, begging from the same spot every day — or trying to sell what no one seems to want... the hungry you hear about in far away places... those it's easy to forget about or simply not see...

That's where we meet Jesus.

And here we are thinking we're doing a favour to those to whom we offer help.

When in fact they're doing us an even bigger one as they bring Christ to us...

Through them he comes closer.

As I say I wish I'd known...

What side was I on?

It doesn't really matter which side I was on — it's what side you're on that matters now.

All I can say is open your eyes, your ears, your hands, your hearts to the people and the world around you — the world beyond these four walls — because it's there that you'll find Christ. It's there that you'll be able to serve him.

Know the joy of feeding him, of giving him something to drink, of finding him clothes to wear. Discover the privilege of being able to find a place for him to rest his head for the night — of nursing him when he's sick — of visiting him and you'll find riches beyond measure, the riches of his eternal blessing.

Prayers of Intercession

Using "O Lord, hear my prayer" from the Taize Community as a sung refrain (Songs of God's People No. 85), present your prayers for local and international needs. The prayers can be offered while the tune is played through once, then the congregation sings before the tune is played and prayers are offered again. Repeat this for as long as it takes!

Hymn suggestions:

The Servant King

Will You Come And Follow Me

We Cannot Measure

*Psalm 23**

The King Of Love

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Loving Shepherd

Thy Hand O God, Has Guided

Look Forward In Faith

Bind Us Together

We Are One In The Spirit

Christ Be Our Light

* (Tune: Brother James' Air, Crimond, or a traditional tune: available to download from

www.cwwresources.org.uk/advent)



The following ideas could be part of an Advent service or a short stand-alone service.

WAITING...

Introduction

Leader Advent is a time of waiting and reflecting. It is a time when we remind ourselves that the Kingdom of God is all about waiting but it is waiting with a difference, waiting with expectation. Perhaps longing is a better word. It infers an understanding of the idea or person or thing for which you are waiting.

All *Christ has died*
Christ has risen
Christ will come again

Leader When he comes to reign, all will be well!

Praise All *“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”*

[Church Hymnary 4, No. 273, Church Hymnary 3, No. 165]
(Sounds great unaccompanied!)

The call to the place of confession through waiting

(Two readers)

Reader A Waiting is a facet of prayer that is seldom given much attention.

Reader B It is to cultivate the practice of silence, in order to live a life of praise!

Reader A Today nobody wants to wait.
Everything has to be instant.
We have made a virtue out of speed.

Reader B At the heart of this philosophy is the tyrant greed
We have been seduced by the spirit of selfishness.

Reader A We cannot escape the market place

Reader B Neither can we escape the presence of God
But we must leave the mentality of the market place behind
if we are to encounter God's presence.
The psalmist often invites us to wait in silence for God.

(A member of the congregation or gathering comes forward and lights a candle that has been placed beside a bible. Barber's Adagio is played and the congregation is invited to meditate. Others could come forward and light a candle or one candle might be sufficient for the whole group to meditate around)

Waiting



Prayer of Waiting

Leader Consider the phrase: “When He Comes to Reign”

(Pause)

Leader *The Lord is my shepherd,
He gives me all the time I need,
He tells me to wait awhile
To listen
He invites me to rest,
To be still,
To drink from fresh clear water*

*As I wait
He gives me a new strength.
I feel I know where I am going,
While waiting
I’ve received more than I need
For this moment.
I have his promises.*

Praise All “I Waited Patiently For God”

[Church Hymnary 4, No. 31]

Video WAITING (included on the DVD)

Reader A The waiting time has always been a feature of the lives of those who know God. It calls for self-discipline, or else it ends up as nothing more than daydreaming.

Reader B We need to practise what the psalmist meant when he spoke of meditating on the law of God. It is to empty the mind of things that are temporal in order to grasp the sheer reality of the spiritual.

Reader B Robert Murray McCheyne once described this process as the turning of the heart for prayer. Others have deliberately made days when they practised the art of silence, punctuated only with the necessary conversation for daily living.

Reading Isaiah 40: 1-11

Video *TIME PASSING* (included on DVD)

Reading Isaiah 40: 25-31

Sermon (theme based on the passage above)

Leader When we spend time with God in silence, he reveals much in our lives that needs to be forgiven. Forgiveness comes through confession and confession brings renewed strength.



Prayer of Reflection

*Lord
Forgive me
When I leave no room in my diary
To let others achieve.
Teach me how to make space
For others
To allow them to grow
To develop,
To shine.*

*And when they refuse
Show me the gracious way to understand
That my pace may not always be the right one.*

*Lord, the truth is,
When I'm busy,
No one can keep up with me.*

*Create space in my time
To let me coast
In order that others might see
The way that I'm travelling*

*Put the brakes on my life, Lord.
Slow me down
Until my heart and mind
Are as still as a deep pond
Reflecting the beauty of your workmanship.*

Praise All

“Be Still, For The Presence Of The Lord”

[Church Hymnary 4, No. 189]

A Benediction Leader

*Go into the world.
Take time to wait.
Pace yourself
For the right move.
Be patient for the tide.
Feel the wind of God.
The Spirit of grace
Caress your body, soul, and spirit,
Then flow in the power of God's tide.*

Waiting