



WORSHIP OUTLINE

Call to Worship

Come, let us praise the living God, whose works are wonderful and whose faithful love endures for ever.

Hymn 1

Come, now is the time to worship or Let us build a house where love can dwell

Prayer

Almighty God, creator of all things
from the vastness of space to the tiniest amoeba,
from the mighty mountains to the fragile wing of the dragonfly,
all knowing, all seeing, all loving,
it is so amazing to know that you care about each one of us
and that it makes you so happy to see us gathered here today,
from the older generation with their wealth of wisdom and experience
to the youngest infant with their giggles and wide-eyed eagerness,
each one with something to share, something to contribute, something to learn.
May you take pleasure in our praise and our prayers,
May you speak to us through our songs and our learning,
May you inspire us through your word and bring us closer to you through our worship.
AMEN

Introductory talk

Today is Education Sunday – I wonder why we might want to celebrate Education Sunday today. Gather ideas. Which children and young people have started in a new class this week? Who has changed schools or gone to college or university? When do we start learning? When do we finish? (*encourage involvement from the congregation, especially the children/young people*) Who can tell me about something new they learned this week? (*encourage all generations to contribute stories*).

We begin to learn, to form and flourish, from even before we are born and can continue to form and flourish throughout our lives. In the Bible, David wrote lots of songs called Psalms to express his thoughts and feelings to God and there is a very famous, very beautiful psalm he wrote which expresses how God is with us and guides us as we form and flourish from the very beginning to the very end of our lives, and beyond. Let's listen to it together.

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Reading

Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18 The Inescapable God

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

- ¹ *O Lord, you have searched me and known me.*
- ² *You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.*
- ³ *You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.*
- ⁴ *Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.*
- ⁵ *You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.*
- ⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.....*
- ¹³ *For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.*
- ¹⁴ *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.*
- ¹⁵ *My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*
- ¹⁶ *Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.*
*In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.*
- ¹⁷ *How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!*
- ¹⁸ *I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end—I am still with you.*

Hymn 2

Our God is a Great Big God OR Living and learning (Out of the Ark)

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Prayer

God, our father and mother,

who has watched over us from the moment we were conceived and cares about every aspect of our lives,

thank you for the chance to learn and grow and explore the wonderful world you have given us. Thank you for those who guide us on our way,

enriching our experiences, adding to the things we know and understand, helping us to question and wonder and never stop learning and changing.

Thank you that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. **Amen.**

Reading

Jeremiah 18:1-4 New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)

The Potter and the Clay

¹ *The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord:*

² *'Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words.'*

³ *So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel.*

⁴ *The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.*

Talk (or replace with a sermon)

Get everyone in the congregation to pretend that they have a tub of Play-Doh in their hands. Imagine opening the lid and taking the Play-Doh out. Imagine looking at it and playing with it in your hands for a moment. Think about what colour Play-Doh it is. Is it the same as your neighbour's? When we begin to grow inside the womb, certain things are set – things like our eye colour and hair colour and even things like whether we can roll our tongue or not – just as the colour of the Play-Doh is determined even before we open the tub.

Now start to model the Play-Doh into a pot shape. How are you doing that? You are pressing and pulling, squeezing and moulding, using your fingers and your thumbs to shape it. From the moment we are born, even before, we are influenced by others and by our environment. This is where we start to learn and grow, to form and hopefully to flourish, though not everyone gets the same chances and influences in life and these can affect our choices. Some things in life can affect us, things like poverty or violence or neglect, things that damage our self esteem, choices we make or others make, all of these can have negative effects on how we develop. But God holds us in His hands – no matter how misshapen or wonky we may be, God is a master potter and he knows just how to take us in his hands and reshape us, if only we will let him. He can make us into something beautiful if we learn from him and trust him. He has a vision of the person he wants us to become – we can have a good go at forming ourselves into that person but we can only truly be re-formed if we allow God to have a hand in the process – the master potter who makes all things new.

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The first step in throwing a pot on a potter's wheel is to centre the clay. It matters where that clay is centred. If we centre our lives on Jesus, then God can do the rest. We are fearfully and wonderfully made and God's will is for us to be formed, to flourish and to be reformed to be more and more like Jesus.

Remember to get everyone to put their Play-Doh back in the tub and put the lid on.

Hymn 3

He's got the whole world in his hand or Jesus, be the centre

Prayer

(with response – said or sung)

Lord, we are fearfully and wonderfully made,

Forgive us for the times when we think we know best and fail to learn from your word and your example, neglecting the chances we have to do the right thing

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me

Forgive us when we fail to live up to the hope you have in us and let the influence of life have more impression on us than the influence of Jesus.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me

We thank you that, if we centre ourselves on you, you will reform us and help us to flourish, no matter where we may have got it wrong in the past. We thank you that you have a purpose for us and will keep your hand upon us throughout our lives.

Make me, mould me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

AMEN

Hymn 4

Jesus, you are changing me

Offertory and offertory prayer

Prayers of intercession

Get volunteers of each age group to bring a Bible appropriate to their age and place it on the table in front of the cross as the prayer progresses:

(Get a cradle-roll secretary or pastoral leader to place a new baby card by the cross first of all) Jesus, we pray for all babies who are beginning to develop in the womb, for pregnant women and for those who long for a baby but are unable to conceive. We pray for babies who are unplanned or unwanted, for those who are vulnerable to smoke or alcohol, drugs or violence, for those whose genetics or in-womb experiences threaten their development.

May they form and flourish in your love

(a toddler/under-five) Jesus, we pray for all babies, toddlers and pre-school children as they begin to learn about the world into which they have been born and will grow. We pray for those

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little ones around the world who are vulnerable to sickness and disease, those who will not have enough nourishment to help them thrive, those whose parents are unable to care for them. We pray for all little ones starting nursery or pre-school or in day care and all who care for them.

May they form and flourish in your love

(a primary school child) Jesus, we pray for all children starting school or going through primary school at this time. We remember those whose education is affected by hunger or poverty, those who struggle to learn or who find themselves understimulated by school, those who may worry at being somewhere new or who find it difficult to settle. We pray for all who teach them, support them and nurture them.

May they form and flourish in your love

(A secondary school young person) Jesus, we pray for all those who are at secondary school, for teenagers as they negotiate adolescence. We remember those who struggle with self esteem or who just don't feel they fit in. We think of those young people who have mental health problems and anxiety and of those who may be influenced by others who don't have their best interests at heart. We pray for those who mentor them and guide them, who teach and support pastorally. We remember, too, those young people around the world who have little or no access to education.

May they form and flourish in your love

(A young adult at college or university or doing an apprenticeship) Jesus, we pray for all those who are beginning their adult life, whether in college or university, apprenticeship, workplace or trying to find their next step in life. We pray for them as they move towards adulthood and the stresses of becoming more independent, making decisions which could have significant impact on their lives ahead. We pray for all who support, advise and mentor them and support them and remember especially those young people who find themselves without that support.

May they form and flourish in your love

(An adult) Jesus, we pray for all those who have reached adult life, formed by the influences of friends and society and their life experiences thus far, especially thinking of those who find life a challenge for whatever reason. May they find ways to centre their lives on you and let you take control. May they seek never to become complacent but to continue to learn and grow.

May they form and flourish in your love

(A more elderly person) Jesus, we pray for all those in their older years who may be feeling loneliness, fragility, vulnerability, and may feel that life has little promise for them now. May they be aware of your presence with them, strengthening and guiding and enriching them. Fill them with a knowledge of your grace and a vision for their role as they continue to learn and grow and pass their learning and experience on to others.

May they form and flourish in your love

And we pray for ourselves – take us, just as we are and work through our lives, centring us in Christ, and raising us to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.

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Lord's Prayer

Hymn 5

Lord of Creation, to you be all praise or One More Step Along the World I go

Blessing

Go with God, to your homes, your schools and colleges, your workplaces, your community, to flourish in God's love, to be reformed by His grace, and to share His good news with all people. Amen.

