

Artfully Done: Seasons of the Spirit Workshop on the Arts

Aim:

- To enable communities to experience the holy through engaging creatively with the lesson themes.

Object:

- Create confidence in using the arts.
- Engage with the lesson plans laterally and creatively.
- Offer a hands-on, holistic approach to *Seasons*.
- Explore using the senses, visuals and movement in the worship area.

Preparing for the workshop

- Bring *Behold!* images: Street person, Arpillera, and September 22nd images.
- Bring flip chart and pens.
- Bring aluminium foil and string.
- Create welcome cards printed with Genesis 15:5.
- Make copies of *This Season So...* from Advent/Christmas/Epiphany for each participant.
- Bring objects that can be used to create a centre for focusing on as people arrive.

A. Engaging with God's People (5 minutes)

Set area creatively with images and symbols.

Use a focus in the centre (stones, candles and coloured cloth).

Arrange chairs in a diamond shape so people can see each other.

Project one of the images from the *Seasons* CD ROM for participants to encounter.

Before people arrive, place a card on each seat welcoming people. Print on it Genesis 15:5 "Look at the sky and try to count the stars; you will have as many descendants as that" along with an invitation asking people to take the piece of aluminium foil (also placed on each seat) and shape it into a star. Once that has been done, if you feel comfortable, hang it up on the string.

Play the meditative music from the *Seasons* CD as people arrive and let people respond to the welcome card.

Comment that engaging people in worship through the arts does not need to be done before hand with a finished "product" to "present" to the congregation nor do you have to wait until worship "begins". People can creatively engage with the theme and issues as soon as they arrive.

- Ask for comments

B. Engaging with the space (10 minutes)

Ask:

- when does worship begin?
- what do people encounter when they enter your own worship space?

On Sunday 22nd September the theme is “Enough for all” and is the story of the workers in the vineyard, it’s also World Communion Sunday. Project the image for this week from the Seasons CD ROM and refer people to it throughout the discussion and how they relate to it as you lead the following discussion:

- How could you enable people’s encounter with the sacred as soon as they enter the door?
- How could you use sounds, symbols, smells etc to engage people immediately? (*Tools placed around as symbols, a clock ticking, clock faces round the worship area, images of farmland projected from slides, bread baking*)

Discussion Questions:

- How do people feel when they enter their normal worship space?
- How many senses do we normally use during worship? Think about your normal order of service. Write these different parts of the service on a flip chart along with the senses used.
- How could we use senses more creatively in encountering God, community and people?

Consider:

- What aids or hinders people’s meeting with God?
- How could you use smells, sounds, images and symbols in the worship area?

In the *Congregational Life* resources, there is always a gathering rite. We can enable that gathering to take place long before the worship leader speaks allowing people to engage within the space where worship takes place. This engenders a creative space to worship a creative God.

C. Engaging with the Text (5 minutes)

Play Barber’s *Adagio for Strings* or some other melancholy piece of music.
Read aloud Jeremiah 8:18-9:1

After a pause, comment:

Already we are engaging in the arts. Through this sense experience with the scriptures the community’s encounter with God changes and possibly becomes deeper. By encouraging an engagement with the text in ways other than just through listening to words being read, we uncover layers of experience and theology in the story we’ve never encountered before. This is the spirituality of imagination, creation and inspiration.

- Ask for comments and feelings about this engagement with the text
- Does anyone now feel different about the text?
- What things prevent this happening?

There are a great number of ways to engage the arts within the Congregational Life material. The following three suggestions are only some of the ways to encourage creative input into the life of the congregation and should take much longer than the 10 minutes we have been able to allocate to them. Choose just 2 of the sections D, E or F depending on your constituency or resources and offer the third as an exercise participants could try at a later date.

D. Engaging with *Behold!* (10 minutes)

Art is not something done to us but, in worship, it is very much something we can take part in. Refer participants to their *Learner Materials* and ask them to look at the exert from *Behold!*. Comment on the two formats in which *Behold!* is produced (Booklet and CD ROM)

Refer participants to the number of sense that are normally used during a classical service.

Project the image of *Street Person* from the Seasons CD ROM and comment how it is used in the material for October 20th where the worship leader addresses the old man in the image.

- What sort of questions would you like to ask him? Write them on a flip chart. Ask for suggestions on how to use:
 - Turn into a litany
 - Use the image during the previous week's bible study and ask people the same question. Ask them in turn to pose these questions during the service thus involving all God's People in creating the worship agenda.

Discussion

- What has seeing the image enabled us to do?
- Have we learned anything more?
- Have we engaged in a different way?
- What have we done to our usual encounter with God?
- Has our view of God changed through using creative art forms in this way?
- Have we met God in a new way doing this?

E. Engaging with the flow of the year (10 minutes)

Distribute the *Learning Together* pages. Invite participants to share pages if there are not enough to go around.

Explain that throughout the Congregational Life resources there are articles on the background to images from *Behold!* and to special Sundays in that quarter. There is also the CD ROM with images and material and music on it that can be used at every age level. These pages will offer as much information as possible on the background and the context of the themes running through the resources.

Invite the group to quickly look through the resource pages.

Inform participants that the year is divided into "quarters" following the church year, expressing the flow of Jesus story, the mysteries we meet in each, and enables us to engage in ministries of justice, love and care.

Through the arts we are able to help people through that journey and one possible way is to create overall art pieces that focus our attention as well as our souls as we move through the themes of each quarter.

- Having looked briefly at the *This Season So...* sheet is there any thought or image that pulls at your imagination?
- Having chosen one such image how could that thought or image be developed into a piece of artwork for the whole congregation.

Suggestions to think about:

- an ongoing piece that could be added to
- a symbolic object used for focusing
- a banner or hanging
- made by one group or many
- pulpit falls, communion table cloths, stoles
- is it for looking at and responding to or is it for touching and feeling
- is it something everyone could have a piece of (stones, seeds, material, nails)
- developed during different times of the season with particular symbols added appropriately (covenanting, harvest/thanksgiving, remembrance)
- can it be moved (cube of montages, cross of images, footprints in sand path)

Questions to ask of any piece of art you create or consider using:

- in what way does it help?
- what senses does it use (remember to consider smell and taste)?
- does it engage different age groups ?
- is there space for people to offer their reaction?
- if it is one piece, is it hung/placed in a way everyone can engage with it?
- if it is in small pieces for people to touch, carry with them etc is there enough for everyone?
- is there space for people to grow and react to that growth?
- is it on going?

F. Engaging with Learning and Serving (10 minutes)

Refer participants to the image in *Behold!* of the *Chilean Arpillera*. This is the main image for P2. Project it onto a large sheet of blank paper that can be written on or onto a dry marker board.

- Ask participants to meditate on the image, focusing in on a particular part of the Arpillera that draws them.
- Ask them to consider what does that part of the image say to them: what questions does it ask of them and their lifestyle; what vision or hope does it give them for the community they live in; what truth of the gospel does it speak to them.
- Invite people, if they feel comfortable, to take a pen and write that word or phrase or quote or question onto the area of the Arpillera that provoked the idea. It is perfectly safe to draw or write on the paper the Arpillera is projected onto.
- Remove the image leaving a montage of words: a prayer, a litany, a promise for the forthcoming session. This could be referred to throughout the year, linking back to or using as the basis for projects within the community over the year.

Discussion

- How useful did people find this process?
- Are there ways to develop this idea?
- Could they see something like this being done?

- Are there other places within the life of the congregation something like this could be done rather than in worship?
- Have people been able to say more and explore different angles of community and faith through interactive use of arts like this?
- Have we enabled people to touch and explore new areas in our encounter with the holy?

G. Odds, Ends and Questions (5 minutes)

Mention additional resources will be found on the seasons of the Spirit web site:
www.spiritseasons.com

Invite questions.