



OUTLINE FOR ALL-AGE WORSHIP

Entering

Display a large-scale map of your area with the local schools, college(s) and university (if you are near one) marked clearly.

Have small post-it notes and pens available and invite people, as they enter, to write the name of someone they know who is connected with any of these educational institutions. They might like to note whether the person is a student, staff member, parent, grandparent or carer, governor or volunteer. Children and young people can write their own names and stick them next to their school, college or university.

Bring the map to the front of the church when you pray for education in your community later in the service.

Gathering

Thank you God for bringing us together to give thanks for our education, and for all who help us to learn and grow. As we use our words to praise you, we remember that we can also use words to encourage and support others. Amen.

Song

Let the cross shine out (In this house all people shall be welcome): words and music available here <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/14348/let-the-cross-shine-out-vocal-and-piano.pdf>

Let us build a house where love can dwell / All are welcome (see Ancient and Modern 365, Singing the Faith 409).

Introduction and discussion

Words are powerful things. When we are learners, we sometimes feel that those who teach us talk too much. We might get told to be quiet if we interrupt, or talk when we should be working.

A word of praise can make us feel really good, but we might feel sad or uncomfortable if our teachers give us less positive feedback.

Outside the classroom, we talk with friends, and sometimes our words might not be as kind as they could be.

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Think back to the conversations you had yesterday:

Did you say something encouraging to someone? Did someone say something encouraging to you?

Did you say something negative? Did someone say something negative to you?

What effect did it have on other people?

What effect did it have on you?

You might ask the congregation to talk in groups for a few minutes and share their experiences. Some might be prepared to share with the whole congregation.

A prayer of confession

Loving God,

We know that we do not always choose the right words to say and that sometimes we have hurt people with our words and actions. Forgive us for the wrong we have done and help us to speak kindly.

Amen

Readings

Isaiah 50.4-9a

Psalms 116. 1-8

James 3.1-12

Mark 8. 27-38

The focus of the resources is on the readings from Isaiah and James.

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Song

Help us, O Lord, to learn (see StF 501, Ancient and Modern 658)

God of all learning <http://www.gbod3.org/musicdownloads/GilletteMcIntyre-GodofAllLearningBUNESSAN.pdf>

(This song is by Carolyn Gillette, from the United Methodist Church in America. The tune will be familiar. You can find out more about it here: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/god-of-all-learning>).

Sermon/talk

The sermon (here: <https://www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=291874>) offers opportunities for interaction and develops the themes from the passage from Isaiah and the passage from James.

It focuses on a word of thanks, a word of encouragement and a word of hope.

You may choose to use or adapt the sermon, or to take ideas from it to use in a briefer talk, depending on the practice in your church.

Activity

- » Ask the congregation to think about the people they know who are learners or educators, or those who support them. How would they thank them? What encouragement would they offer? What words of hope would they speak?
- » Provide everyone with 3 pieces of card or paper and pens (including coloured felt pens, or coloured pencils).
- » On the first piece of card, ask them to write a word of thanks to someone involved in education. It may be someone they know – a family member or a friend, a teacher or teaching assistant, or perhaps someone from one of the local educational institutions. It doesn't have to be just one word, but should be fairly brief (so that it doesn't take too long). They may choose to decorate the paper or card.
- » On the second piece of card, they should write words of encouragement, and on the third piece of card, words of hope.
- » If they have someone specific in mind, ask them to give that person the paper or card (if they are present in the church).

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- » If there are a number of cards that are written to people in local schools, colleges or universities, they could be collected and someone could deliver them to the institution, with a brief covering letter from the church, and perhaps even a box of biscuits or some cakes.
- » Younger children may like to draw a picture to thank or encourage someone who helps them learn. Alternatively, they may like to ask an adult to write or to help them write some words, which they can then decorate.
- » You may like to display the words of thanks, encouragement and hope before they are given away.

Song

The Word in a Season, Anne J. Sardeson

(This is a new song for Education Sunday 2021. Words and music can be found in the Education Sunday resources.)

Commissioning prayer for those in education

The specially-written commissioning prayer is available with the resources for Education Sunday, here: <https://www.cte.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=291873>. You may wish to find readers from the relevant sectors of education for the different sections of the prayer, and to invite those in the congregation who identify with those sectors to stand so that they are prayed for.

At this point, you may like to bring the map of your area to the front and invite leaders and members of the congregation to pray for your local schools, colleges and universities, and the individuals named on the post-it notes.

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A prayer for others

Dear God,

We thank you for our schools, colleges and universities: for those who learn, those who teach and those who support.

We remember children and young people who do not have access to education because they cannot afford it, because their families need them to work or because the society in which they live does not make it possible for them.

We think of those whose education has been disrupted by natural disasters, by disease or by political situations (you may choose to name some situations here)

We thank you for those who campaign for education for all, who work to improve access to education, and for all who use the education they have received for the benefit of others.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (in whatever version your church uses).

Song

We wish you well – Fischy Music

You shall go out with joy (see Rejoice and Sing 415, StF 487)

Blessing

Let us go now to offer words of love and words to live by, words in times of need, words of hope when someone is struggling, and words that sow a seed.

Amen.

(adapted from The Word in a Season, by Anne J. Sardeson)

