

Transforming Lives

Autumn 2008



Notes for Leaders of Study Groups

Thank you for helping to organise and lead one or more sessions in this Autumn 2008 Transforming Lives series. This series of three studies is designed to help us explore aspects of God, and to then go on to explore what that means for us, our faith and our lives.

These Leaders' Notes give some reminders and checklists.

Probably the single most important reminder is this:

Much more material is provided than can reasonably be used in one week's session. Often alternative suggestions are offered. Please choose those materials you think will work best for your group and be most helpful. But also don't be afraid to experiment and try something new!

The Icebreakers are there to help the group relax in a fairly light-hearted way. If 'Icebreakers' have the opposite effect on your group then abandon them!

Make sure you allow plenty of time for prayer and worship, so these are not just bolted-on as extras, but are a good part of the whole session. Through prayer and worship people can be helped to ponder, explore and respond to the themes in ways that simple discussion cannot achieve.

You may need to remind your group that what is said in discussion may be very personal and should therefore be treated confidentially. No gossip.

The guide below explains which resources are needed for each week.

Session 1 – God who comes to us

Resources needed

Christmas Cards

These images look much better in colour than in grey. They can be downloaded in colour and then printed. Go to www.wakefield.anglican.org/transforminglives and look for the Autumn 2008 section, and then 'Week 1 – Christmas card images.pdf'.

These can be printed on any home computer and then cut to size. Print sufficient copies so that there are plenty for people to see and choose.

Broken Open poem

You can see and hear Jude reading the poem at www.hopeinfo.co.uk/index.php/Conversation.

Worship options

There are a variety of worship options. Please be selective, and use whatever you feel will suit your group.

Worship option: 'From heaven you came'

If you plan to sing or read the hymn 'From heaven you came', you will need song books or copies of the words. The words can be downloaded from http://shop.kingswaysongs.com/product_info.php?cPath=2_17&products_id=51.

Worship option: God in our mess

You will need a tray, a display of rubbish and litter, enough paper and pens for each person, a candle and holder, matches.

Session 2 – God who is just

Resources needed

Your Kingdom Come

A large piece of paper and pens are needed for writing up what might be different if God's kingdom had come.

Icebreaker

This week invites people to look at a page of a newspaper and find stories they think would upset God, or please God. You will need several recent newspapers – local or national.

A vision of the Holy City

An A4-size version of this, with the key parts blanked, is downloadable from www.wakefield.anglican.org/transforminglives. This larger version might be easier for your group to use and fill in. If useful please download and print several copies. Go to the Transforming Lives page on the diocesan web site and look for the Autumn 2008 section, and then 'Week 2 - Glasgow writing.pdf'.

Worship option: a prayer from Iona

You will need three candles in holders and some matches.

Action together: Fair trade drinks

Some fair trade drinks – coffee, tea, juice or even wine. Fairtrade wine is available through most large supermarkets, but especially at the Co-op.

Session 3 – God who reveals

Resources needed

The Mystery of God

For this activity you could paste a picture of anything onto card and then cut it into sufficient pieces for each person to have one plus at least three or four 'spare' pieces. It doesn't need to be a picture of anything in particular. It could be the back of a cereal packet! But the picture needs to be big enough so people in your group have something they can easily hold and use – the size of a postage stamp will be too small!

There are two images for download on www.wakefield.anglican.org/transforminglives. Look for the Autumn 2008 section, and then 'Week 3 – puzzle images.pdf'.

Worship option – Pass-the-Parcel

You will need a small box and a symbol of the Christ child to put inside. This could be the crib and/or baby from a nativity set, or a nativity scene from a Christmas card, or simply a piece of coloured card with the word 'Emmanuel' written on it. The box would then be wrapped in several layers of Christmas wrapping paper, as for a game of Pass the Parcel. Don't have too many layers!

You will also need some music to play quietly in the background, preferably something with a gentle Christmas flavour. But this exercise is not intended to be a 'Christmassy Pass-the-Parcel'! Music needs to be gentle and reflective.

Pass the parcel around as music is played. Fade the music down from time to time, and ask people to think of some aspect of the Christmas season that blocks our view of Jesus (for example overeating and drinking, consumerism, the pressure to spend, stress and strain in families, loneliness). Invite anyone to keep hold of the parcel, speak out a 'block' or something that gets in the way between us and Jesus at Christmas, and then unwrap the next layer of paper as a prayer is said for this barrier to be removed. The unwrapping is a prayer in itself, and it could be accompanied by simple words such as "Lord please take away this layer, and help us to see you more clearly this Christmas". Others may wish to add their own prayers.

As the final wrapping is removed and the Christ-child is revealed, ask people to think of someone to whom they would like to pass Jesus this Christmas, and say their names out loud or offer them in silence. Encourage some prayers of praise and thanksgiving for Emmanuel, God with us.

What you will need

If you use the 'Pass-the-Parcel' worship option:

- Gentle Christmas music on a CD + CD player.
- Wrapped parcel, with Christ or Christmas image inside.