ALL AGE WORSHIP

WHAT IT IS…

- A chance for God's family to meet together, with no one age group feeling that they are any more, or any less important than another.

- An opportunity to show love to one another by doing those things which a family would do to incorporate and respect one other.

- A chance to praise God in words and actions and songs – whichever and however is right for each individual and without any judgement being made.

- A time to learn together from a message which allows people to understand at their own level. Some children might well have a greater understanding than some adults and vice versa.

- A rare time in church for those who are kinaesthetic learners (prefer to learn by doing) to be able to learn in their preferred style.

IT ISN'T…

- With a bit that you like, then a bit that I like, then something for Mrs Jones…

- **EMBARRASSING** for anyone! Some people hate action songs (and some of those who hate them are children!), some hate coming to the front, some hate being asked to get out of their chair.

- **BORING** for anyone! Incomprehensible! This can often include lines in songs

- **EASY!** Actually it's very hard to do this, and to get it right month after month. When it all works it looks (from the outside) as though it's all naturally fitted together and often no-one will say anything about the service; but when it goes wrong you can be sure that everyone will tell you so!

WAYS TO PLAN

There are plenty of books on the market with ideas for All Age Worship – you can use these for all your planning OR you can get a group of people together and start with a blank piece of paper. The down side of this method is that it can seem very disjointed, with activities put into the service just because they look good/fun.

So, try this method of planning in order to give the overall service a structure.

1. Read the Bible passage and pray for guidance, wisdom and inspiration; several times
2. Now, very importantly, and if possible with some others, fill in the first box on the planning sheet. This is for you to work out the MAIN MESSAGE. It's what, at the end of the service, you want everyone to KNOW and everyone to go away and DO. Now look at each of the four sections of the service and plan what could happen in each one. Keep your main message in mind all the time. Don't just put in an activity because it is fun or because you like it!
3. Work out how long everything will take. Aim for an All Age service to be between 40 and 50 minutes long. A Messy Church worship time might be shorter.
4. Look at the style of each activity. Is it AUDITORY, VISUAL or KINAESTHETIC? (Do you listen, see or do!) Make sure you have a mixture of styles.
5. Put the service together using your church's usual order of service for All Age services.
6. Pray again!

SONGS/HYMNS

Don't feel that everything you sing has to be a "children's" song with actions! don't respond well to this type of music, and if you just have an organ or a piano you might feel a little more limited in what you can do.

A few guidelines –

- Try to choose songs or hymns which don't have obscure or archaic language.
- Any song or hymn which has a phrase or line which is repeatedis useful because you can encourage those who find reading hard work to join in. Equally a chorus can serve the same purpose
- Aim to include some quieter or more meditative songs – it's often good to give some focus for these times, eg "As we sing the chorus let's think about people in the world who don't have a home to live in"
- Make your song/hymn choice reflect the GATHERING, TEACHING, RESPONDING and SENDING OUT shape of the service.
- Think about having processions/banners/flags as part of the worship, so that there is a visual element to your singing.

LANGUAGE

It is hard for leaders and speakers to pitch the language and tone just right. Try to use as normal a voice as possible, without talking down to anyone or using babyish language. It might be helpful to have an honest friend in the congregation who can tell you if it's coming across in a suitable way.