



Signs of Life

The Family of God

An all-age service



**kitchen
table
project**

Inspire a faith that lasts

Introduction

Running all-age services during the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly challenging. So we've created this online service with ideas for you to use as a way of helping the whole congregation connect with each other.

The service is divided into three sections: Worship, God's Word, and Response & Sending. Within each section are a number of options which you can choose and adapt, depending on your circumstances. We have made suggestions based on whether you are using a Zoom-style two-way video conference software, or a one-way stream such as YouTube or Facebook Live.

It is so good for everyone – adults and children – when we connect with our church family, and feel part of the wider work that God is doing. We hope that you have fun involving every one, of every age, in your time together!

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Worship

Call to worship with actions

If you lead this on Zoom, make sure that the leader knows the actions well and that the congregation is muted. If you pre-record this for use in a service, see if you can get a family to lead the words and actions.

Take a moment to learn the response, using these British Sign Language signs (see signbsl.com for more help with this):

LOVE - cross hands over heart

FOREVER - make your pointing fingers face each other, tip to tip, and circle around

FAITHFULNESS - do the sign for faith: point to your head with your right pointing finger, then bring hand down into left palm, side down and perpendicular

GENERATION - twist your thumbs around and around, beginning over your shoulder and moving forwards.

Then lead the psalm, encouraging everyone to join in the response with the signs.

Psalm 100 (New Living Translation)

Leader: For the Lord is good.

All: His unfailing **love** continues **forever**, and his **faithfulness** continues to each **generation**.

Leader/
Reader 1: Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.

Leader: For the Lord is good.

All: His unfailing **love** continues **forever**, and his **faithfulness** continues to each **generation**.

Leader /
Reader 2: Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

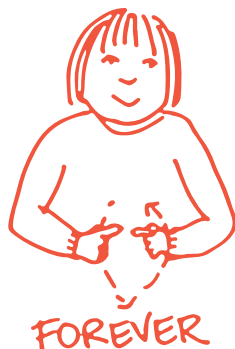
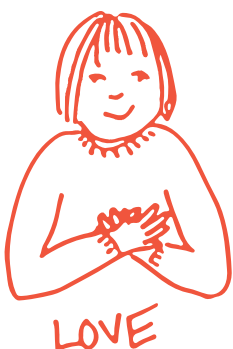
Leader: For the Lord is good.

All: His unfailing **love** continues **forever**, and his **faithfulness** continues to each **generation**.

Leader /
Reader 3: Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.

Leader: For the Lord is good.

All: His unfailing **love** continues **forever**, and his **faithfulness** continues to each **generation**.



Possible worship songs

Join us in the mess by Andy Flannagan and Sam Hargreaves (lyric and actions videos available to download free and use in streamed services from engageworship.org/joinusinthemess)

He's got the whole world in his hands (actions video available to download free and use in streamed services from engageworship.org/whole_world)

A Lament for isolation

Explain that the Bible is full of examples of people complaining to God, telling him why they feel sad. In the Bible, these complaints are known as 'laments'. There are many laments in the book of Psalms - the worship song book of the Bible - which let us know that we can, maybe even should, be honest with God as part of our worship together.

There's even a whole book in the Bible - Lamentations - which contains all the complaints and sadness that the people of Israel felt when they were taken captive by the Babylonians. But in the middle of this book, we read this:

*The Lord's great love and
his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

(Lamentations 3:22-23, simplified from the NIV)

Take a moment to think about what makes you feel sad right now (or if you have many young families, allow people a chance to talk about it together).

For pre-recorded:

Ask a few people to either record on camera what they feel sad about, or send you the things they feel sad about by text message which you can then read out. Alternatively, you could pray, listing the things that you know are making people sad at this time. After you have named two or three sad things, invite everyone to read the verses from Lamentations 3:22-23 with you. Repeat this as many times as you like.

For worship over Zoom or live video:

Ask people to write in the chat what they feel sad about. Read these out as prayers of laments (God, we feel sad about... is all you need to say), inviting everyone to read the verses from Lamentations 3:22-23 as a response to each thing. Repeat this as many times as you like.



God's Word

Bible readings

New Testament: Mark 10:13-16

A paraphrase (taken from Jesus & Emotions: A Creative Journal for Families engageworship.org/emotions)

One day, Jesus was sitting down, teaching his followers. As always there were crowds milling around; curious people, people who needed help, people who wanted to catch Jesus out. Lots of families were there too, with kids running around, playing hide-and-seek behind their parents tunics and shawls. The parents wanted the best for their kids, so decided to bring them up to Jesus.

"Please, Jesus, place your hands on my children and bless them!" they asked. They had seen Jesus bring healing and life to those he had touched, and who wouldn't want that for their kids?

But Jesus' closest friends told them off!

"Do you think Jesus has time for your kids?" sneered Peter.

"He has much more important things to do!" exclaimed John.

"Don't interrupt the teacher!" said James, and told them to go to the back of the crowd.

But Jesus saw what was happening, and he got angry!

"What are you doing stopping the kids from coming to me?" Jesus asked his friends indignantly,

"Don't stop them! It's for people like them that I've come!" He gave his friends a final frustrated look, "In fact, and this is the truth, if you don't come to me like a child, you won't be able to come at all!"

While his friends scratched their beards, felt a bit bad for being told off and wondered what he meant, Jesus gathered up the kids in his arms. He blessed them, spoke joy into their lives, and perhaps joined in with a game of peak-a-boo too.

Or:

Use the version of this story from Bob Hartman's *Rhyming Bible* (p.96, Waiting in Line), or the song version [Waiting In Line](#)

Or:

Ask someone in your community to film themselves reading the story from their own Bible.

Old Testament: The Story of Eli & Samuel (1 Samuel 1:1-2, 9-11, 20-28, 2:11, 18-21, 3:1-11, 19)

You could find the story of Eli and Samuel in a good children's Bible and ask someone to read, otherwise the key verses are given above (the full story is a little long and complicated for younger children).



Or:

Use this **interactive paraphrase**. Prepare the congregation by showing the actions, and perhaps practice saying the trigger words to check that they remember the actions.

OLD - sign a long beard from your chin, and maybe try to look a little ancient.

LITTLE – hands close to each other, showing something small

HEARD - hand behind ear

TOGETHER - shake hands with yourself

A long, long time ago, there was a woman called Hannah. She was sad, because she did not have any children. Her husband Elkanah tried to comfort her, saying "Don't be sad, we have each other, we'll stick **together!**" But still, Hannah was sad. And every year, when Hannah's family went to a special place to worship God, a big tent set up in Shiloh, Hannah would pray that God would give her a **little** child.

There was an **old** priest in Shiloh, called Eli. He was faithful to God, but he was **old** and his own children were misbehaving, not very good priest material. **Old** Eli saw Hannah praying one year, and they talked **together**. He added his prayer: "May the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." And God **heard** Hannah's prayer!

Soon after, Hannah had a **little** son, who she named Samuel, and she and Elkanah loved him very much. But Hannah did not forget how God had **heard** her prayer and how **old** Eli had prayed for her. So when Samuel was still **little**, maybe as **old** as you were when you started school, Hannah took him back to Eli at the tent of worship.

"God **heard** my prayer and gave me **little** Samuel, now I want to give him back - he will live here with you Eli and help you serve God," she told **old** Eli.

So Samuel stayed with **old** Eli and helped with all the **little** things, lighting candles and running errands, and the big things, like praying and worshipping. **Old** Eli and **little** Samuel served God **together**. He even wore a priest's robe! Every year, Hannah would make Samuel a special **little** robe, just his size and bring it to him when she visited.

One night, when **little** Samuel was trying to go to sleep in the special tent, he **heard** someone call his name, "Samuel!" Samuel, of course, thought it must be **old** Eli needing help with something. So he ran to Eli, and said "I **heard** you call my name, here I am, what do you need?"

Eli rubbed his tired, **old** eyes, "Well son, you **heard** wrong, I didn't call your name - go back to bed!"

But before **little** Samuel had a chance to go back to sleep, there it was again: "Samuel!" Again he ran back to **old** Eli, "I **heard** you call my name, here I am!" But again, Eli told him that he had in fact not called his name, and Samuel really needed to go to bed now!

When it happened a third time, and Eli was woken up again, the **old** priest wondered if perhaps there was something else going on. He told Samuel: "Samuel, I think you **heard** God! I think God wants to speak with you."

So Samuel went back to bed, and soon again he **heard** "Samuel! Samuel!"

And the **little** boy answered God: "I've

heard you call my name, now - I'm listening, ready to serve!"

And God spoke to him about what was going on in the country, what was good, what was bad and what needed to be done about it. Samuel told **old** Eli, and they worked for God **together**. And Samuel, who was only **little**, **heard** God and became a very important prophet, speaking for God to the people of Israel.

Sermon outline

Key points:

We need each other in the family of God, one group of people aren't more important than another. We see in the readings that Jesus did not look down on children and we see in the story of Samuel that young and old can work together to serve God.

Show a picture of for example, Piccadilly Circus in London (or your own town perhaps) from above, using a satellite photo from an online map. Ask if anyone can see which is the highest building in the picture? (this may be hypothetical or lead to actual interaction depending on whether you are live or pre-recorded).

Then show a street-view picture of the same street and see if it's easier to answer the question.

Explain:

When we look at a town from above, every building looks similar in height, but when we're on the street, we can see that some buildings are really tall and some are low. You see things differently from different perspectives.

God looks at us from a different perspective than how we look at one another.

When we look around at each other, we immediately see the differences between us: You are short and I am tall, you have fancier clothes than I do, I have curlier hair than you have; you are young and I am old.

In the Bible stories we listened to, we see that God doesn't look at us like that - he doesn't see the big differences, but he sees that everyone is loved, important and can do great things for him.

In the story of Jesus blessing the children, his disciples were surprised that Jesus didn't look at the children in the same way as they did. From their perspective, the little kids were unimportant - they couldn't yet hold important positions in the synagogue, couldn't go out and make money. They were just noisy, in the way, and stopping Jesus from getting on with the important stuff.

This is one of the few times in the Bible where we read that Jesus got angry. His disciples saw the children as unimportant by the standards of the society they lived in. In contrast, Jesus saw the children's easy joy, their faith, their sense of wonder. And he told the grumpy disciples that, actually, it was *they* who needed to become more like *the kids* if they wanted to follow Jesus!

In lots of stories in the Bible we read about Jesus talking to - and respecting - not just children, but anyone that the people around him saw as less valuable. It was as if Jesus looked at all the people around him in the crowd and saw them as equals, not noticing that some were short, some

tall, some rich, some poor, some disabled, some married, some single and so on. It says in Romans 2:11 *"God does not show favouritism."*

Often, our culture highly values children, but is often quick to forget the value of older people. Seniors and retired people can be written off as "past it" or "has beens." But we know that God sees value in everyone, and God has put us together as a church family so that we can serve one another and appreciate our different gifts and perspectives.

In the story of Samuel and Eli we see that that there is something beautiful and rich when old and young serve God together.

Eli knew all the things about how to run the special place of worship, the tent of meeting, and he taught Samuel these skills. And Samuel was able to hear God in a way that Eli wasn't. They needed each other.

Either:

Give examples from your own life of when someone much older or much younger taught you something about God, or when you were able to work together to achieve something for God.

Or:

Go into discussion groups if you're in a platform that allows for that.



Discussion

When have you learned something about God or about how to be a Christian from someone who was very different from yourself? Someone very old or very young? Or someone from a different country or background?

How could you develop relationships with people from the church who seem quite different to you?

Response and sending

Songs

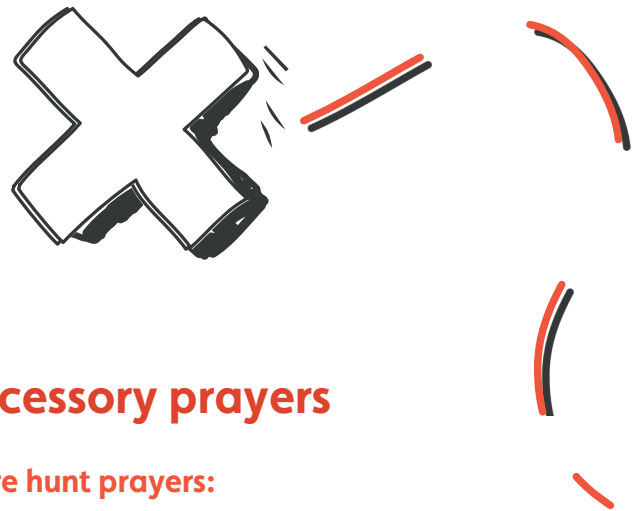
"Big Family of God" by Nick & Becky Drake.

"All the Walls that Would Divide Us" by Adam Parkes.

Active response

Write a "thank you" to someone in your church community who has taught you something about God or how to be a Christian. Choose from the following options:

- Write the thank you in the chat of the platform you're using.
- Write the thank you on a card and deliver it to the person's house.
- Send either digital or paper 'thank yous' into the church office to be distributed by leaders



Intercessory prayers

Treasure hunt prayers:

Ask everyone to engage in a game of treasure hunt. For each object found, ask someone to improvise a prayer around that subject. This may be easier to do in smaller groups, especially for young children who might want to talk about the object first.

Find: Two things that only work when they are together (for example, an electric hand mixer and the metal whisks, or a Lego figure's upper body and legs)

Pray for: Everyone in the church working together to serve God.

Find: The newest thing in your house.

Pray for: Those who are very young or new to the faith.

Find: The oldest thing in your house

Pray for: Those of you in the community who are older in years.

Find: Something that smells good.

Pray for: That your church, serving God together, will spread a beautiful fragrance in your area.

Or

Formal prayer:

"Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvellous deeds. Even when I'm old and grey, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation." (Ps 71:17-18)

God, Father of all, we pray for our church, that we will see each other as you see us: equally valuable and able to serve you.

We pray for those of us who have lived a long time.

Help us not to tire of declaring your marvellous deeds. Remind us how important it is to speak of you and show your love to those in the generations below us.

We pray for those of us who are young.

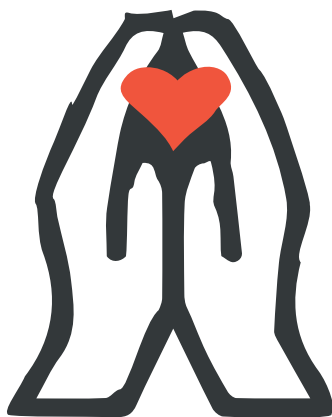
Help us to not doubt our value in your Kingdom or wait around for the future, but to serve you today. Thank you that you want to teach and train us from our youth, help us to hear you and also those who are older who have gone before.

We pray for those of us who feel different or on the outside in our community.

Thank you, Father, for the example of Jesus, including the outsiders and those looked down upon. Help us to know our intrinsic value and be brave enough to serve you, just as we are.

In the name of God the Father who made us all, the name of God the Son, Jesus who died for us all, and God the Holy Spirit, who empowers all who ask.

Amen



Affirmation and sending

End the service with this affirmation. First teach the signs for the response:

WE - move right hand, palm up, in a semi-circle in front of you, as if indicating 'everyone'

ONE - hold up pointing finger

CHRIST - with opposite pointing fingers, point at your palms, one after the other, to show the wounds in Jesus' hands.

For downloadable powerpoint:

<https://www.engageworship.org/ideas/are-one-christ-poem>



We are many,
God's great diversity,
yet we are one in Christ.

Different faces,
different races,
yet we are one in Christ.

Butchers, bakers,
website makers,
bankers, tailors,
teachers, sailors,
yet we are one in Christ.

Fathers, mothers,
sisters, brothers,
single, married,
broken, carried,
yet we are one in Christ.

The happy, the clappy,
the barely out of nappies,
the ancient, the modern,
the famous, the forgotten,
yet we are one in Christ.

Some hopeful, some hopeless,
some cope well, some cope less.
Some sure and some doubt,
some whisper, some shout,
yet we are one in Christ.

Those with abundance,
those with need,
those who are generous
or wrestle with greed,
yet we are one in Christ.

Elbows, tummies, knees and noses,
kidneys, femurs, teeth and toeses.
Some unmentionable, some protected,
some accepted, some rejected,
yet we are one in Christ.

A broken body,
torn apart,
mars God's image,
breaks God's heart.
And yet our Father knows how the end will be,
when all his kids will sing in harmony,
the bride will dazzle, her branches bloom,
so add your voice to hymn the tune
that we are one in Christ.

Cross-generational ideas to try

Household penpals:

Find out which households in your church want to be involved, then pair up households that are very different from each other (for example: a household with children and a household without children, a household with teenagers and a household with toddlers, a household of student housemates and a household of a single pensioner etc.) Give / email each household the letter template to use, but also encourage free style writing and drawing.

Church-wide journal:

Get hold of a good quality A4 journal and see who wants to be involved in filling it up. Plot out a list of volunteers like you would plot-out a circular walk, making it easy to pass the book around. Stick your list inside the cover of the journal along with the instructions, then give it to the first person on the list.

Instructions:

- Write / draw / collage one or two pages of this journal before passing it on to the next household on the list.
- You can write down something funny that has happened, the top three things that bring you joy during this difficult time, a favourite family recipe, a drawing of your favourite flower or anything else that you think others would enjoy reading about or look at.
- Please take a maximum of three days to do your pages before passing the book on to ensure that it doesn't get forgotten about somewhere.



- Something small and simple is better than big, time consuming and perfect. The aim is just to bring connection and joy to one another.

If this works and you all enjoy it, you may print it as a photo book once it has gone through the list. If there are not too many people on the list, you may want to keep passing the journal around until it is filled.

Prayer pals:

Ask everyone who wants to be involved to email in a picture of themselves (or send someone around with a smartphone to snap a doorstep photo). Redistribute the photos (with names attached) to different households, making an effort to send people photos of church members they don't already know too well. Encourage households to pin up the picture somewhere and pray for that person daily, in the knowledge that someone else is praying for you. You may want to redistribute the pictures once a week. How wonderful when we're finally able to meet again, to see faces that you previously didn't know, but have now spent days praying for!



Inspire a faith that lasts

The Kitchen Table Project is a movement of mums, dads and carers coming together to support each other, learn from each other and share ideas so we can inspire faith in our children.

Follow us on social media **@ktpcampaign** for daily encouragement, ideas and resources.

[**kitchentable.org.uk**](http://kitchentable.org.uk)



@ktpcampaign

Care for the Family is a Christian initiative to strengthen family life.
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