

An All Age Communion/Liturgy Drama.

Steve Holmes – from blog at www.steveholmes.org.uk

I had to lead an all-age communion service at LPO. (Well, when I say 'lead' ... Cath and Rach planned and led the worship, including a wonderful, if somewhat destructive, spoken word piece by Cath's husband Dai; my role was a very brief preach and to celebrate at the table.)

I believe in communion liturgy – not that we should use the BCP or the Roman Missal, but that, whatever words we use, there are things that matter, and must find a place: the recollection of the Lord's institution of the meal; the eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving; the epiklesis, invoking the Spirit ; ...

In a very informal, and all-age, context, then, thinking about how to celebrate exercised me a little. The tradition of LPO was clearly very inclusive: all would be invited to the table. (Is this my tradition? I'm actually not sure at the moment, but I celebrate communion in many contexts, and simple politeness demands that I conform to the practice of the community I have been invited to share with and lead on that day.) I wanted an invitation that would make it clear to children what we were doing and why. And I had about three minutes in a very informal holiday camp setting.

My mind went to reports I'd heard of all-age communions at the BUGB-BMS Assembly in recent years. Children asking questions, as happens at an Orthodox Jewish Passover meal. I emailed a couple of folks asking if anyone had the liturgy. Andy Goodliff was very helpful with other options, but no-one did. I discovered from a passing comment from Lynn Green on FB that much of that part of the service had been improvised.

So I wrote a script. Enough people asked me for copies that I promised to make it available. I should explain that this was written for our three girls. Judith is 14, Philippa 12, and Elspeth 7, so the pattern of Elspeth asking questions and her two elder sisters offering answers seemed natural.

Steve: On the night he was betrayed Jesus ate a passover meal with his closest friends. But he changed it. The passover meal was a great celebration of everything the Jewish people knew about the way God saves us – but Jesus knew so much more about the way God saves us. And Jesus knew that we would know more. And so he changed the meal.

In Jewish tradition, the links between the meal and God saving us are explained when the youngest child in the family asks four questions about why this meal is different from every other meal. As we are together, young and old, to celebrate the communion meal, we thought it would be good to tell the story borrowing this tradition. So, let me introduce you to my daughters...

E: Why have we got bits of bread and drinks in church?

P: Because Jesus told us to eat bread and drink juice to remember him. So we do. Because he told us to.

J: The Bible says, 'On the night that he was betrayed, Jesus took bread. He said grace, and then gave it to his friends. And he told them to take it and eat it, to remember him. Then he took a glass of wine and gave it to them, and told all of them to drink it to remember him. So we take bread and wine, or grape juice, to remember him, like he told us to.'

E: But why do bread and juice help us to remember Jesus?

J: Well, Jesus said the bread was his body, and we break the bread into pieces like his body was broken on the cross when he died to save us. And he said the red wine was his blood, and his blood poured out of his body from his wounds on the cross when he died to save us. So bread and wine help us to remember that Jesus died on the cross to save us.

P: And when we eat and drink the bread and juice we are very close to Jesus.

E: So what do we do?

P: Jesus said grace first, prayed to God to say thank you for the food. So we pray and say thank you to God for the bread and the juice.

J: Then everyone who loves Jesus takes a bit of the bread, just a little bit, and eats it. And everyone who loves Jesus has a little drink of the wine.

E: And will we always do this?

J: No. Jesus said we had to do this until he comes back. One day he will come back, and put right everything that is wrong in the world. And then everything will change, even this meal.

P: The Bible says there will be a huge party when Jesus comes back. So we eat this meal to keep us going until we can really celebrate at Jesus' party.

E: And can I eat and drink?

P: Everyone who loves Jesus can eat and drink.

J: And everyone who knows they want to love Jesus can too. But first, like Jesus did, we need to pray. I think our Dad's going to do it.