



## HELD TOGETHER IN CHRIST

### VISION AND COMMITMENT

A year to focus on integration



He **i**s before all **th**ings, and **i**n Him all **th**ings hold together.

*Colossians 1:17 (NIV)*

## INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

### PREPARATION AND ETHOS

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#### Theme

The theme of Commitment Sunday, **Held Together in Christ**, is inspired by the word *Integration*, the second of the four strategic priorities of **TIDE**. The primary definition of integration is ‘to bring together or incorporate (parts) into a whole’ (Dictionary.com).

In terms of TIDE we are seeking to engage the whole of the Army to reach the whole of the person through the whole of our mission. The focus passage is Colossians 1:3-20 - key verse 17. Other passages that can support the theme can be found in Galatians 6 and John 6:1-14.

#### What does it mean to be intergenerational?

The term ‘all-age worship’ can sometimes evoke preconceptions of ways to entertain children and make adults do what they’re perhaps not so willing to do! Providing resources according to spiritual and learning styles rather than by age can help both adults and children of any age interact together.

#### Things to consider:

- If you don’t have children or young people in your Sunday congregation, think about the expression of stages of life expressed there - parents, grandparents, greatgrandparents - that’s three generations already, without any children being present at all.
- The word ‘family’ has been used from time to time in the preparation of this resource and recognition has been made that this might not be a very inclusive world for some people.

#### Aim

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These ideas will help a congregation explore and experience *integration* through a meeting which shows how everyone can participate in ministry and be encouraged to engage in mission. This may be a shift for some people. However, the ideas in this outline can be slotted into a meeting in an appropriate way for the group. It might lead you to consider just how far-reaching multigenerational ministry and mission extends- it’s really not just about what happens on Sunday morning, although that is important.

## MATERIALS

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- **Envelopes** containing a picture of one of the following: (SEE ATTACHMENT 1)  
Kazoo, triangle, jingle bells, bicycle bell, pair of cymbals, drum, maracas, whistle, tambourine, xylophone.
- **The actual musical items too.** Some of these you might find in your toddler group cupboard if you have one, so source those first, then keep them out of sight somewhere to use during Participation 1.
- Enough **paper bunting triangles** and a paperclip for every person to have one each, and some equipment for them to colour or decorate them in some way. They can tear, scrunch and fold too. Even if they choose not to decorate them, you will be encouraging everyone to bring their 'flag' to be part of the corporate string of bunting at some point in the service, depending on where it seems appropriate for a response time to be held. (SEE ATTACHMENT 2)
- You will also need to have prepared some **bunting** before the meeting, writing on them the names of the groups that meet in your hall during the week - ask people to help with this during the opening prayer time.
- **A piece of paper and pen** or each person to take notes or doodle on.
- **A flip chart and thick pens.**
- **Vision and Commitment Sunday video**
- **'The Art of Celebration'** Clip by Rend Collective - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VamJCsYMFbg>
- **You might want to consider** getting a number of other people involved to help you lead the various elements of the service - think about attitude, not just age.

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

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*(Engaging the thought process of the whole congregation from the youngest to the oldest)*

Your personal preparation and understanding of the theme will enable you to manage the expectations of your congregation for today's meeting. Let them know there will be opportunities to chat together, to think and reflect, to move around, to respond and to work with each other.

Let them know that the aim is not to make them feel uncomfortable (although you recognise that they MIGHT!), but to get a sense through feeling, participating, reflecting, creating, thinking, talking and listening, what it means to know they are part of something bigger, brought together, in this instance for the purpose of worshipping God, learning how to get closer to him and to each other, and how to take that 'family' feeling into their week, wherever they might be. You might want to make mention of learning styles and attitude rather than age.

## INTRODUCTION 1

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Start the meeting by showing the Vision and Commitment video to help set the scene about Christ's presence being part of who we are, what we do and how that reaches into the wider world around us.

## INTRODUCTION 2

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- As an icebreaker activity, ask people to group themselves by decade of birth to show the different age categories existing in the congregation.
- Choose a younger person and an older person. Ask them questions such as: How many people are/were part of their close family? What are/were their favourite toys or games as a child? What do they enjoy about being their current age? What do they find difficult about it? Conclude by asking them to pray for each other regarding something they are currently facing.

## BIBLE READING - COLOSSIANS 1:3-20

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Explain that in our Bible reading we can see how many challenges can contrive to pull us apart or away from God's plan for our lives, and how they might influence our desire to build a wall around ourselves or our family. We see something of Paul's understanding of integration - he speaks of Epaphrus, a 'fellow servant', and uses words like 'we' and 'us' and talks about sharing in the inheritance. He illustrates something of the 'togetherness' and relationship between God and his Son Jesus, and how through that we can be reconciled - a beautiful word of 'bringing back together' - with God. So look out for these things and more as you share this passage together.

- *Invite doodlers and notetakers to make note of the thing(s) that get their attention.*
- *Invite those that follow from the screen or in a Bible to pay attention to the words that 'jump out'.*

## PRAYER TIME 1

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*(Engaging the reflectors - a safe and reassuring time during worship)*

Explain that the Bible reading commences with an assurance from Paul to his readers in Colossae that they are being prayed for with thanksgiving, vigorously and continually. *The Message* paraphrase puts it like this:

*'Our prayers for you are always spilling over into thanksgivings. We can't quit thanking God our Father and Jesus our Messiah for you!'* (vv3-5).

It goes on to outline a list of Paul's prayer requests for them, that they will be filled, bear fruit, grow and be strengthened, receive endurance and patience, give thanks and share in the inheritance of all God's holy people. He reminds them that they are rescued from darkness and redeemed, forgiven from their sins. Quite a list!

Some people are prayer warriors, keeping a prayer journal or list - but how do you actually know who to pray for and what to pray about?

### Option 1

Ask people to come to the front to write on the bunting the names of the midweek groups that meet in your building or of people who take part in them. Have a couple of people to help hang these up. Share in a corporate time of prayer for the topics that were written down.

### Option 2

Prior to the meeting ask some people to help you attach the flags to the string and write on the flags the names of the groups, teams and people who make up the corps. Pray in small groups for the topics that are represented.

Tell your congregation that during the course of the meeting, at any point they can add to the bunting - prayer requests, encouraging Bible verses, testimony, words of a song, a picture. There will also be a response time at the end of the service if they want to add more to the bunting.

Consider leaving the bunting up a the week so that the midweek groups can also engage and add to it.

## PRAYER TIME 2

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In preparation, invite a family or small group of mixed ages to lead the time of spoken prayer. Using the ACTS model, ask them to pray prayers of:

**Adoration** - *worshipping God for who he is, focusing on the Trinity, the Godhead, three in one, divine integration - a perfect pattern to follow in terms of working together.*

**Confession** - *saying sorry for the times when we go it alone, when we don't include others, when we are not team players.*

**Thanks** - *rejoicing and thanking God for the different people that make up the corps and the contributions people bring.*

**Supplication** - *asking God to make you aware of where he is already working with you, within the issues and concerns of your lives.*

There might also be current affairs that you can pray about where unity is required worldwide or local to your community, in your family and in your corps.

## PARTICIPATION TIME 1

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*(Engaging the thought process of the whole congregation from the youngest to the oldest)*

Ask the congregation: 'Who loves going to a party? Who loves preparing a party?'

Wonder out loud about preparing a party. When, where and why would you hold one? How can you keep everyone happy and make sure it is the joyous occasion you were planning the whole time? What food might you serve? What entertainment would there be? How could you ensure everyone felt included? Who might you leave out?

Watch the clip *The Art of Celebration* (7 minutes) in which a party is being prepared. Hand out pens and paper to people and ask them to take notes or draw a picture of the things that are said or seen in the clip that speak life, spark a thought or resonate in a good way.

*For those that might have had a negative response to the clip, suggest that those concerns are parked and discussed over a coffee after the meeting.*

You can collate responses by getting someone to be the scribe on a flip chart, or simply ask people to share from their notes. What are the feelings, thoughts and views that seem to connect people together?

## PARTICIPATION TIME 2

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Choose a joyful, lively song. To ensure that it's not just the children that volunteer to help, say that some people without knowing it have an envelope under their chair. Ask them to bring it up to the front.

*Give the option for people to nominate someone else if they appear to be really uncomfortable.*

Remind the congregation that there was a one-man band in *The Art of Celebration* clip (Participation Time 1) and that we are going to create a deconstructed one-man band with people - hopefully across the age range of the congregation.

Ask participants to open their envelope and swap the picture inside for the *real life* instruments provided. Have a practice at making a joyful noise - if you have a bandmaster/leader/music teacher available, invite them to organise the group in some way. The many-personed one-man band will then accompany the song.

## PARTICIPATION TIME 3

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Consider Christmas Day lunch (you might need to consider the Christmas Day of a sitcom family). ALL of the family is coming to your house - what would you have to do to ensure everyone has a seat at your table? Ask them to chat with the person next to them.

Draw out some of the things that might have been discussed. For example:

having to make up a spare bed or sleeping on the sofa, extending the tables, bringing chairs from all over the house, having to cater for vegetarians, those who need gluten-free and those who don't like sprouts, while taking care of babies and Great-Aunty Hilda and keeping an eye on those two feuding cousins!

In the end they all come together for the time that is 'Christmas lunch' and all get a taste of something of what you had prepared - you might be hiding in a corner under a tea towel, but you did it!

For one beautiful moment in time, you are 'held together', integrated, working like a well-oiled machine in the context of a feast - passing the salt and the gravy, pouring a drink for the person next to you, sharing a joke, finding out what someone is like. And then it's Boxing Day and what was together is scattered once again.

## PARTICIPATION TIME 4

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If the Vision and Commitment video hasn't been used already, this is a good time to show it to help set the scene about Christ's presence being part of who we are, what we do and how that reaches into the wider world around us.

## ADDITIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS ON INTEGRATION

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### The Mobius strip

(<http://www.cassidycash.com/how-to-create-a-mobius-strip/>)

*You'll need a strip of paper connected to form a circle and a strip of paper twisted and connected to form a Mobius strip.*

We can also be disconnected from ourselves. In his book *A Hidden Wholeness* Parker J. Palmer, a Quaker, uses a strip of paper ('Here is one I created earlier' etc) to illustrate how our inside and outside life can make us disconnect from other people. We can put on a front or a mask and this causes tension within ourselves, let alone our family or our church, creating an inside life and an outside life.

He suggests we should be working towards living lives that are true to who we actually are, an 'inside out, outside in' kind of life, illustrated by tuning the circle of paper into a Mobius strip (show your example). He says that the mechanics of the Mobius strip are mysterious, but its message is clear: whatever is inside us continually flows outwards to help form or deform the world, and what is outside continually flows in to form or deform our lives.

### The Shipwreck

In his blog 'At Home, Thinking', Mark W. Weaver reflects on G.K. Chesterton who, in his book *Orthodoxy*, once observed that our walk through life is much like stumbling upon a shipwreck.

Strewn about in front of us, in chaos and disarray, are both worthless debris and precious treasures. Hidden somewhere in the mess is a story. Examining the pieces one by one, we can find a small amount of meaning. But only when the pieces are re-assembled, reconstructing the essence of the original and revealing the whole, can we begin to see the plan and the purpose that existed from the inception.

He goes on to say, 'Our life in Christ is much like this, with understanding coming to us in tiny bits and pieces. It is up to us, with the aid of God's word and the Holy Spirit, to assemble the many seemingly disconnected parts, and begin to reconstruct them into a cohesive whole. When we do, we experience the proverbial "a-ha!" each time a little more of God's purpose and plan come more clearly into focus.'

## CHALLENGE

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What does all this mean for us as a congregation, as sections, as families, as groups, as individuals, as a corps?

*The Message* version of Colossians 1:18-20 says:

*'He (Jesus) was supreme in the beginning and - leading the resurrection parade - he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe - people and things, animals and atoms - get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross.'*

Explain that this *fixing together* is not something that will happen in the future - although it will - but that Jesus' death and resurrection is good for NOW too. We can claim this 'mending', this fitting 'together in vibrant harmonies' today.

Lead a time of responsive prayer as you feel led and give time for response.

## RESPONSE

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### Bunting

Choose a reflective song for people to add to the bunting prayer requests for themselves, the corps and the community. Encourage the midweek groups to add to it too.

### Vision and Commitment Card

Use the opportunity for people to engage with the commitment cards. After people have signed theirs at the mercy seat or where they are, the perforated part of the card can be separated and used as part of a collective response.

Here are a couple of ideas of how this could be done:

- Fix them to a cross or a display to represent the individual elements of the corps coming together as one. Ideally this would be something that can remain on display throughout the year.
- Find someone in the congregation to exchange their piece of card with as a symbolic gesture of physically stepping forward and committing to unity and integration. Once people have exchanged cards, encourage them to pray for the person they chose, and vice versa.

Encourage people to keep the piece of card which they signed with them throughout the year, or displayed somewhere where it can be a continual reminder of their commitment.

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ATTACHMENT 1

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ATTACHMENT 1 (CONT.)



ATTACHMENT 1 (CONT.)

ATTACHMENT 1 (CONT.)

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ATTACHMENT 2

