

Lenten Worship - National Deacons Gathering

last week i led a sessions on "resources for lent" for our national deacons gathering which has been going on here in Adelaide. I perhaps foolishly decided to make it experiential, which resulted in hours of work and barely getting ready in time...

i looked over the lectionary readings for the 5 weeks of lent, and initially chose texts around which I had resources to offer, then rearranged the order of the weeks slightly as follows. Most of what we did at each station was a recreation or adaptation of things that I had previously done at college chapel or elsewhere.

I'm partly posting this as I didn't give the deacons all of the sources for the resources.

Testing – Matthew 4:1-11

- "Ash" liturgy from "[Celtic Wheel of the Year](#)"
- Scripture paraphrase from [Nathan Nettleton](#) (I used these throughout)
- "Reflexions" Cards from [Innovative Resources](#)
- "40" animation by Si Smith (available from [Proost](#))
- Song "Pacing the Cage" by Bruce Cockburn from the album "The Charity of Night"
- Community song "Lord, listen to your children praying" (by Ken Medema) from "[All Together For Good](#)" - we sang this at 3 of the stations.
- ashes from my Webber BBQ!

Thirsting – Exodus 17:1-7

- Video Clip of desert crossing from [Rabbit Proof Fence](#) (sans soundtrack) with music from "[Paris, Texas](#)" by Ry Cooder and subtitle [prose by me](#)
- bowls of water, bowls of sand, stones
- reflection by me from Exodus chapel worship - words from 'station one' [here](#)
- Community song "Lord, listen to your children praying"
- blessing 'a deep knowing' by me [here](#)

Emptying – Ezekiel 37:1-14

- skeleton & bones, candle, stones, black and red cloth, fire bowl, newspaper clippings spread around the floor, laptop with an image of a hunger striker with lips sewn together
- I was going to play Gorecki's Symphony no. 3 but the chapel CD player was stuffed and I didnt have time to rig a replacement
- gathering words adapted from the chapel service on Ezekiel [here](#) - how to make the fire properly also described here)
- an invocation by [Roddy Hamilton](#)

*Come Spirit:
infuse our being,
filling our parched throats
with rainbow voices.*

*Come Spirit:
crowd our living
with your words of heaven,
and songs of grace.*

*Come Spirit:
invade our space*

*with your righteous anger
and heaven's holy fury.*

*Come Spirit:
flood our conversations
with your rumours of justice
and the laughter of God.*

*Come Spirit:
infect our creeds,
uncreasing your promises
with the poetry of faith.*

*Come Spirit:
embrace our vision
with the casting of love
over the pattern of our dreams.*

Come, Holy Spirit, come

- Scripture paraphrase from [Nathan Nettleton](#)
- Spoken Reflection (based on the station from the chapel worship and previous pentecost retreat)

Because we were running short on time I omitted the prayer in pairs and just allowed for silent reflection.

*Ezekiel reflection
How we have longed at times for a new spirit in the church!
we have looked out across the valley and seen,
not one instance of decay
but a sea of skeletons*

*We too have felt the seeping away of life in all its fullness
in solitude, we have acknowledged that our preaching, our teaching
our prayers, our shepherding even our compassion |
– have failed to bring life
a message falling on deaf eyes, blind eyes, dry hearts*

Is this how Jesus felt?

*How often have we blamed others
for their failure to hear or learn
knowing deep within
that the problem was not theirs alone?*

*if we are honest
we may find this dryness within ourselves
faith stretched thin
hope in slow decay
limited patience
less generosity of spirit*

energy lagging

*Can these bones yet live?
... the bones of a brittle church
... the bones of a crusty congregation?
... the bones of a decaying disciple?*

*What might these bones represent for you this day?
Bones take time to dry and decay.
How has this lifelessness come about?*

*Would you seek a quick dressing-up, a respectable skin?
Or the breath of Yahweh?
Restored sinews and muscle.
Hands that grasp and legs that leap.
A pumping heart and eyes that truly see.*

*May we be a church that is not lifeless in the face of oppression
May we be a church that is not voiceless in the face of injustice
May we be a church which is not cold in the face of indifference
May we be a church of pumping heart, of pulsing veins, a heaving lungs, of vibrant voice,
of warming touch*

*I invite you to consider these news items – to find an item which stirs your blood, which
yearns for your voice, which calls for your response.*

*I invite you to consider what keeps you at times from responding, what keeps your
discipleship cold and lifeless.*

*I invite you to give voice to your passion for justice, your hope for renewal – speak with
another person about what stirs in your gut.*

*I invite you to pray with another person, to ask the Spirit to breath reckless compassion
and prophetic voice into your being for this situation, this cause, these people.*

*- Community song "Lord, listen to your children praying"
- responsive sending out by [Roddy Hamilton](#)*

*May our words be just,
and echo with heaven.
May our touch be in love,
and graced with mercy.*

*May our silence be deep,
and hold all pain.
May our acts be kind,
and proclaim a blessing.*

*May our faith be true,
and revel in each moment.
May our ways be grace-filled,
and shape a holy beauty.*

*May our journeying be untiring,
and pursue justice.
May our dreams be restless,
and filled with spirit.*

*May our living be yours,
and bless the world.
May all we do
turn us always towards heaven.*

Hoping – Genesis 12:1-4a

- chairs set around small tables, candles on tables (I tried to find nice candle holders & small) oil lamps, books open on tables with photos and paintings of children from around the world
- I had planned to start with a clip of a foetus in the womb from "[The Human Body](#)" accompanied by "So Special" from the album "Helium" by [Urban Myth Club](#) and me reading Psalm 139 at the same time, but dropped it at the last minute.
- instead showed the Psalm 39 animation based on "[PostSecret](#)" cards - I think this came from [Anne Marie Goodrich](#) but I might be wrong....
- I spoke about the wilderness journey being a journey of hope and promise - because God creates, calls and accompanies us, and invites us to travel in community
- Scripture paraphrase from [Nathan Nettleton](#)
- people were invited to reflect on the Genesis text, the image in front of them and their own lives, and to talk about what gave them hope
- story & poem from "[Seasons of Your Heart](#)" by Macrina Wiederkehr
- song- "We Belong to God" from "[All Together For Good](#)"
- prayer - Wee Prayer - Abraham by [Roddy Hamilton](#)

*How big are your footprints, God,
and how long is your journey?*

*How many stars did you make, O God,
and which ones have our names?*

*How many others did you call to travel, O God,
before Abraham said 'Yes!'?*

*How long could you wait, O God,
before Sarah would have a baby?*

*How enduring is faith, O God,
and how far-reaching it's promises?*

*Help us count stars, O God,
and help us hear their names.
Help us number the sand-grains,
and hear old women laugh and babies cry,
and then we'll know,
just how far-reaching,
long-enduring,
and full of grace,
your promises are.*

*So be it
Amen.*

Glimpsing – John 9:1-41

(we abandoned the last station because we'd started late and finished late, and for some of them it was the last night of a 2 week event!) However, this is what was planned...

- tables with candles, images of Jesus from "[The Christ We Share](#)", [magnetic poetry words](#), cups of water
- beginning with an invitation for people to close their eyes reflect in silence in their journey so far, followed by an invitation to put themselves in the shoes of the disciples, not knowing about Golgotha, and imagining what might be ahead on this journey to Jerusalem.
- play the healing on the blind man from the [Visual Bible "Gospel of John"](#) DVD
- meditation in pairs on John 9 by me from "Encounters with Jesus".

[Download john-9.rtf](#) -

an invitation to people to look at the Christ images, to see Christ with new eyes of faith, to allow the images to speak to them - an opportunity to speak in table groups of what they see

- an invitation to people to use magnetic poetry to make a response-prayer to God based on their journey this evening - then the opportunity to read these aloud in table groups
- Community Song "All That Is Hidden" from "[All Together For Good](#)"
- a blessing from "[Celtic Wheel of the Year](#)"

That's it. a heap of work I must say but the deacons seemed to appreciate it. of course, I forgot to take photos again...