

Easter. Not your typical love story.



AN INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP RESOURCE FOR EASTER

Easter is a celebration of the Good News of God's love, demonstrated in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

These worship planning notes are prepared to coincide with the Easter 2013 postcard campaign of the Uniting Church SA.

Notes

INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

Intergenerational (all-age) worship is, first and foremost, worship — an encounter between God and God's people; a dialogue in which God speaks and people respond, both in the worship service and in their lives.

Intentionally intergenerational worship

- allows this dialogue to take place in a variety of ways, engaging several senses
- focuses on a clear theme and connects that theme with the lives of the worshipers
- provides worshipers (young and old) with an experience they can remember and talk about in their homes
- encourages interaction and dialogue among people of the various generations
- takes seriously the understanding that people of all ages worship together in the body of Christ. People of all ages can also plan worship, invite people to worship, and lead worship
- recognises and values the children present in the worshipping congregation and 'the child within' each adult.

USING THIS WORSHIP RESOURCE

These notes have been prepared by the Children and Family Ministry Team of Mission Resourcing SA to help congregations plan Easter worship involving children and families as well as youth, young adults, middle-aged and older people.

You may make as many copies of the notes as needed for your worship planners and leaders. The use of music and other copyright elements is not covered in this permission.

Read through all the material. Discuss it as a planning team. You may use any of the ideas that are appropriate in your situation or the entire sample service.

If you use the resource, we would appreciate your letting us know what you do. Send a brief email to children@sa.uca.org.au.

Bible quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Readers Version.

For other intergenerational worship ideas see: <http://sa.uca.org.au/cfm/ministry-leaders/resources/all-age-worship/>

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BIBLE TEXTS

The Revised Common Lectionary texts for Easter Sunday 2013 are:

- Acts 10:34–43 — Peter tells Cornelius that he was a witness to the events of Easter or Isaiah 65:1–25 — The LORD will create new heavens and a new earth
- Psalm 118:1,2,14–24 — The Lord' love goes on forever
- 1 Corinthians 15:19–26 — Victory beyond the grave
- John 20:1–18 (or Luke 24:1–12)— The events of Easter morning

POSTCARD THEME

The worship theme has been suggested by the 2013 Easter postcard produced by Uniting Church SA Communications Team:

'The fairy-tale idea of love — or for adults, the romantic comedy genre — spins a great story but in reality, offers an unrealistic, often unachievable idea of how to give and receive love.

'That's why this year our Easter postcards are celebrating a far greater love story — one that is real, gutsy and captures a love for all people.

The front of the card features fairy tale characters. On the back is the statement:

Easter, Not your typical love story.

This year the Easter postcard campaign goes well beyond letterbox drops. There will be an advertising campaign livening up buses across Adelaide, posters and much more.'

Postcards cost \$65 per 1000.

Posters \$10 for 10

Order online sa.uca.org.au/postcards

Registrations close Wednesday 13th February.

Enquiries to the Communications Team

(08) 8236 4249 or email

communications@sa.uca.org.au.

PLANNING

It's good to have an intergenerational team to plan an intergenerational worship event. A special team of at least three people, representing the youngest, the middle and the oldest thirds of the congregation can work with the pastor/minister/priest or lay ministry team.

The team may also draw on people who have abilities in the areas of hospitality, music, drama, visual arts and technology.

Planning as an *intergenerational* team can be a valuable experience for all involved.

Suggested planning steps:

1. Begin with prayer, and trust God's Spirit to guide your planning.
2. Look through these notes to see how they can help in planning the service God is leading you to hold.
3. Use your regular worship plan together with these notes and other resources to develop a worship outline.
4. Flesh out the outline, considering your own people, traditions and facilities.
5. Work with worship leaders to plan details: who does what, when and how.

INVITATION AND ADVERTISING

The first people to notify about your service are the members of your congregation. Begin early to let them in on the excitement of what is being planned. Encourage them to catch the vision of a deliberately multi-generational Easter experience.

Make use of the Presbytery and Synod's 'Easter. Not your typical love story' campaign resources in your promotion. Encourage members to use the postcard as a personal invitation to family members or others in the community.

Also consider using the A3 poster enlargement of the postcard image as a printed notice in a local gathering place (eg a shopping centre) or on a signboard in front of your church.

Easter is about love. This worship service is about love. Members of your congregation can show

their love for their extended families, friends and neighbours by inviting them to worship with them at Easter. Children can invite older people. Older people can invite children — particularly those who do not worship regularly.

Easter in Australia tends to be a time when families 'go away'. For some congregations this may mean that there will be people returning to spend the weekend with grandparents. Worship can be an important part of that family weekend. For some congregations, it means that many regular worshipers will be away — opening up space in your building for lots of visitors. And for congregations in or near holiday venues, it provides a great opportunity to connect with your transient population.

Easter. Not your typical love story. has the potential of helping people to re-connect with Jesus and his church.

HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is the responsibility of all members of the congregation.

Those people who invite and bring other people to the service have the primary responsibility for looking after their special guests.

A designated **HOSPITALITY TEAM** may have special responsibility for:

- being aware of the safety aspects of the worship space, eg location of alternate exits, location of first aid equipment, identity of people with first aid training
- greeting people as they arrive
- helping people to get settled
Pay special attention to the very young, the very old and people with physical disabilities. Seat them where they will be able to see/hear, but not feel conspicuous
- being alert to needs of people during the service, and assisting as required.

Your hospitality team (also your planning team) need to be aware of the people who may be marginalised by an all-age approach to worship: some teens and young adults, singles, families with no children, people who are experiencing family problems and people who come to worship on their own.

WORSHIP SPACE & VISUALS

A clean, tidy and attractive worship area can help guests and regular worshipers feel that this is an inviting place to be.

Many people who worship with you are visual thinkers; they take in information and express themselves more easily with images than with words. So make sure that you provide imagery that they can respond to. Involve people with artistic talent and your technology team (if you

project images electronically) in creating memorable visual impact for all worshipers.

You may have seasonal paraments, banners or other decorations that you always use for Easter. Check them out and see if they need refurbishing. The post card image can be a starting point for a different visual approach. It may be used alongside other Easter decorations.

For the sample service you will need puppets or posters representing the postcard characters. You will also need a Bible and/or lectern hanging with the words God's Love Story and the heart-in-hand image from the postcard.



MUSIC

Many people who worship with you take in information and express themselves more easily with music than in other ways. So make sure that you provide music that they can respond to.

Much of the music in worship involves congregational singing. Remember that visitors may not be familiar with — or comfortable with — this practice. Invite people to sing when they are comfortable doing so, or just to listen.

Your regular instrumentalists and vocalists (organist, band, choir) may perform some music as well as leading/accompanying congregational singing. Display song words in your usual manner.

Small congregations, or congregations that do not have strong musical leadership, may choose to have the congregation sing with CDs or other recorded music.

Include traditional hymns as well as more contemporary songs and songs written with children in mind.

SONG SUGGESTIONS

Use at least one of the stirring old Easter hymns such as:

- *Christ the Lord is risen today* (Wesley)
- *He is risen, he is risen* (Alexander)
- *I know that my Redeemer lives* (Medley)
- *Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia* (Arnold)
- *Christ arose* (Lowry)
- *Now the green blade rises* (Crum)
- *Yours (Thine) is the glory* (Budry)

Some more contemporary Easter songs:

- *Alive in us* (Morgan)
- *Because he lives* (Gaither)
- *He is Lord, he is Lord* (Mann)
- *I know he rescued my soul / My redeemer lives* (Morgan)
- *Resurrection Shout* (Mann)
- *The stone's been rolled away* (Bullock)
- *The victory dance* (Ylvisaker)
- *You rescued me* (Bullock)

Some Easter songs for children:

- *God's love* (see page 13)
- *God's love* (Veggie Tales)
- *I'm happy on the inside* (Reichelt)
- *We welcome glad Easter* (unknown)
- *Jesus is alive today, sung to the tune of 'Mary had a little lamb'*
(www.perputualpreschool.com)

Some songs on that emphasise God's love:

- *As we lift our hands to worship you* (G Bullock)
- *Because of your love* (R Fragar)
- *Deeper and deeper* (G Bullock)
- *Draw me close to you* (K Carpenter)
- *Forever loved by you* (G Bullock)
- *Jesus dying on the cross* (G Simpson)
- *Jesus, fill me with your love* (G Bullock)
- *Jesus, no one loves me more* (S Tzeegenkoff)
- *Lord I come to you* (G Bullock)
- *The steadfast love of the Lord* (J&D Makedonez)
- *What wondrous love is this* (Folk hymn)
- *You placed your love* (G Bullock)
- *Your love is higher than the mountains* (G Bullock)
- *Your love keeps following me* (R Fragar)
- *Your love surrounds me* (R Mann)

SOMETHING TO DO

Many people who worship with you are kinaesthetic thinkers; they take in information and express themselves more easily when they are moving or touching, handling or manipulating concrete objects. So make sure that you provide something to do. This may be as simple as holding a hymnal or Bible, or making notes.

In the sample service, people are given heart shaped love symbols cut from paper or craft foam. They have the



opportunity to handle and write on the heart.

You might also consider heart-shaped soaps, candles, mini-pillows for people to hold.

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

Some people who worship with you are relational thinkers; they take in information and express themselves more easily when they have a chance to talk it over with another person. Find ways of allowing this to happen in your service, possibly by making aspects of the service (the prayers, for example) more conversational or by providing 'talk about it' spots.

SOMETHING TO TAKE HOME

People are more likely to remember and talk about your Easter message if you provide them with something tangible to take home with them as a discussion starter or memento.

In this service it may be a heart symbol (as above).

WORSHIP LEADERS

One person (or a pair of people) will be the overall worship leader for the service. Worshipers (particularly guests) will recognise this person as the host/compeer who is responsible for the overall flow of the service.

Several other people (of different ages) can each lead different segments of worship.

For example, the sample service may have

- a hospitality team
- a music team: instrumentalists and vocalists with a song leader
- a technology/projectionist team
- a worship leader
- a Bible reader
- a story responder
- seven puppeteers or actors
- a prayer leader/s.

SERMON

The sermon is generally seen as 'the teaching' in a worship service. Where the teaching is done elsewhere or in some other way, there may not need to be a sermon within the worship.

The sample service has teaching elements throughout, with no specific time for a separate sermon. This resource includes a Bible study that can be done by adults, youth or young adults as a preparation for the worship celebration of God's love.

An all age worship service does not require two or more sermons for people of different ages.

There is a single all-age sermon — short, generally a simple application of the overall theme of the service, and (where possible) incorporating visuals and actions.

If the sermon is for 'adults only', provide a theme-related activity for children to do during the sermon, preferably sitting with their families in the worship area.

This resource provides a colouring-in picture and a sheet of figures from the postcard that children can make into simple finger puppets.

If children undertake a separate activity, allow a time for them to share what they have done with the older worshipers.

Starting points for an *Easter. Not your typical love story.* sermon can be found in the Bible texts and or on pages 7 and 8.

UPSIZING & DOWNSIZING

Easter. Not your typical love story. can be used in large or small congregations and can be adapted for use in a home setting.

Each planning group will need to adapt the ideas to suit their own particular situation: the number of people and the size and layout of the facilities.

REHEARSAL

God, whom you worship, and the people who worship with you deserve an Easter worship experience that is the best you can make it. This requires careful planning. It may also require rehearsal.

A complete walk-through will pinpoint any logistical problems, allow the worship leader/s to fine-tune instructions for the worshipers and ensure that the service itself runs smoothly.

Use rehearsal time as an opportunity to pray together.

- Praise God for his amazing love — 'that while we were sinners, Christ died for us'.
- Thank God that you, as a team, have the privilege of leading people in Easter worship.
- Ask God to bring people to worship who are eager to hear and share the good news of Easter — and people who may come reluctantly, but need to hear about God's love for them.
- Ask God to accept your planning and worship leading as acts of love and service to him.
- Ask God to bless your efforts and work through what you do and say — for his glory and the benefit of all worshipers.

What is love?

LOVE IN ENGLISH

The word 'love' in English refers to a wide range of feelings and actions, all of which — except perhaps for the tennis score — originate in God.

dictionary.com lists these meanings of love:

1. a profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person
2. a feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection, as for a parent, child, or friend
3. sexual passion or desire (eros)
4. sexual intercourse; copulation
5. affectionate concern for the well-being of others: *the love of one's neighbour*
6. strong predilection, enthusiasm, or liking for anything: *her love of books*
7. the benevolent affection of God for His creatures, or the reverent affection due from them to God (agape)
8. to have a strong liking for; take great pleasure in: *to love music*
9. to need or require; benefit greatly from: *Plants love sunlight*

Easter is not your typical love story because it focuses on definition number seven, whereas a typical story is about one of the others.

GOD'S LOVE STORY IN THE BIBLE

(Quotations from the New International Readers Version)

The Bible certainly recognises sexual love and human affection, particularly, but definitely not exclusively, in the Song of Songs. But its overall message is about definition number seven.

Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is One! And **you shall love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and quoted by Jesus in Mark 12:29-31)

Lord, **your love is great**. So forgive the sin of these people. Forgive them just as you have done from the time they left Egypt until now. (Numbers 14:19)

Your love is always with me. I have always lived by your truth. (Psalm 26:3)

Lord, **your love** is as high as the heavens. Your faithful **love** reaches up to the skies. (Psalm 36:5)

Your love is better than life. I will bring glory to you with my lips. (Psalm 63:3)

His great love is new every morning. Lord, how faithful you are! (Lamentations 3:23)

God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Jesus said: 'Here is my command. Love each other, just as I have loved you. **No one has greater love** than the one who gives his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.' (John 15:12-14)

Love is patient.

Love is kind.

It does not want what belongs to others.

It does not brag.

It is not proud.

It is not rude.

It does not look out for its own interests.

It does not easily become angry.

It does not keep track of other people's wrongs.

Love is not happy with evil.

But it is full of joy when the truth is spoken.

It always protects.

It always trusts.

It always hopes.

It never gives up.

Love never fails.

(1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Love does no wrong to a neighbour; love therefore is the fulfilment of the law. (Romans 13:10)

Love is the purpose of my command. **Love comes from a pure heart**. It comes from a good sense of what is right and wrong. It comes from faith that is honest and true. (1 Timothy 1:5)

We know what love is because Jesus Christ gave his life for us. So we should give our lives for our brothers and sisters. (1 John 3:16)

No one has ever seen God. But if we **love** one another, God lives in us. His **love** is made complete in us. (1 John 4:12)

The following is from 1 John 4:7-21:

Dear friends, let us love one another, because **love comes from God**. Everyone who loves has been born again because of what God has done. That person knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love**.

How did God show his love for us? He sent his one and only Son into the world. He sent him so we could receive life through him.

What is love? It is not that we loved God. It is that he **loved** us and sent his Son to give his life to pay for our sins.

Dear friends, since **God loved us** that much, we should also **love one another**. No one has ever seen God. But if we **love**

one another, God lives in us. His **love** is made complete in us.

... **God is love.** Anyone who leads a life of love shows that he is joined to God. And God is joined to him. So love is made complete among us. We will be bold on the day God judges us. That's because in this world we love as Jesus did.

There is no fear in love. Instead, perfect love drives fear away. Fear has to do with being punished. The one who fears does not have perfect love.

We love because he loved us first. Anyone who says he loves God but in fact hates his brother or sister is a liar. He doesn't love his brother or sister, whom he has seen. So he can't love God, whom he has not seen. Here is the command God has given us. Anyone who loves God must also love his brothers and sisters.

LOVE STORIES IN LITERATURE

(from questopia.com)

The theme of love has been a recurrent one in the history of literature. Love is an interesting subject in literature because love, unlike other themes, has many twists and turns and many different endings. Love has been present in early works of literature, such as Greek and Roman mythology, and has continued through Victorian and contemporary times.

Love is unique in that it is a constant: while it goes on through different decades and different centuries, the elements stay the same. In addition, love is used in literature to complement other themes, such as violence or sadness. It is useful as it gives common ground to otherwise unrelatable individuals.

Many times, literature exhibits love in an unrealistic manner, usually portraying a happy ending, but it has been said that this occurs as the author wishes to exhibit to the reader what love would look like in a perfect world.

It has been said that early writers and poets used the term 'love' to suggest 'moral, ethical and social phenomena which were deeply connected with friendship and the development of morals'.

In the 12th century, love is seen more as a bond between the genders and an emotional force.

It has been suggested that by this time, writers were using love as a way of exhibiting freedom from enemies of that time and to show that there was now a "leisure class" who could enjoy the pleasures of love.

In **The Merchant of Venice**, William Shakespeare writes: "Lovers ever run before the clock, quite unaware of what others think of them as people committing mistakes."

Romeo and Juliet is the ultimate symbolic example of the story of young love and doomed love. Shakespeare interestingly breaks from traditional courtship views of his day.

Other stories on the New York Public Library's list of the top love stories of all time include:

Wuthering Heights (Emily Bronte) The love story of Heathcliff and Catherine expresses the idea of 'giving oneself unreservedly to another and gaining a whole self or sense of identity back — so that nothing else in the world matters'.

Anna Karenina (Leo Tolstoy) explores the duality between the love for family and romantic love. Love is used both positively and negatively. Anna does not have love within her marriage so she seeks it elsewhere. However, this in turn leads to her committing suicide.

In **Sense and Sensibility** (Jane Austen) love does not come without some discomfort. While the main protagonists end up with happy endings, they endure sadness and tragedy in the pursuit of love.

Pride and Prejudice (Jane Austen) suggests that love is a "privilege" and not something that marriages are based upon. Instead, marriage is built upon economic necessity.

LOVE STORIES IN FILM, TELEVISION, MUSIC

You can't have your television or radio on for very long without hearing or seeing something about love — generally sexual love or sentimentalised love.

For a huge collection of quotations about love, see www.quotegarden.com/love.html

Not your typical love story ... or is it?

THE TYPICAL LOVE STORY

Mills and Boon is one of the world's most successful publishers of romantic novels. They claim that there is no formula; each story is unique.

But, honestly, when we think of a romantic love story, we expect that

- boy (often a handsome prince or a cowboy) will meet girl (a damsel in distress or a strong woman who thinks she can handle the world on her own),
- they will encounter and overcome some sort of obstacle (inherent in their own personalities or coming from the outside world);
- in the process they will discover that they are 'in love', and will live happily ever after.

Most of us know this is a fairy tale that doesn't happen in real life. But we'd like to think it could.

Easter is not a romance story contrived by a human writer. It is history, written in human lives by God.

GOD'S LOVE STORY

Easter is not a typical fairy tale romance. But it is the TYPE* of all of them:

Everything was created through him . . . He (the Prince) came to his own people (the girl) but they didn't want him (the obstacle). Whoever believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said — he made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves. (the 'happy ever after' victory)

Story Précis: *This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting live.*

Plot development: *. . . Jesus arrived from Nazareth, anointed by God with the Holy Spirit, ready for action. He went through the country helping people and healing everyone who was beaten down by the Devil. He was able to do all this because God was with him.*

. . . and in Jerusalem they killed him, hung him from a cross. But in three days God had him up, alive, and out where he could be seen. . . We were the ones there to eat and drink with him after he came back from the dead. . . Our witness that he is the means to forgiveness of sins is backed up by the witness of all the prophets.

(Words in italics from John 1 and 3 and Acts 10, in 'The Message' by Eugene Peterson)

***Type:** the perfect example, a thing or person that represents perfectly or in the best way a class or category. **Typical:** exemplifying most nearly the essential characteristics of a higher group (dictionary.com)

Easter Prayers

O Lord Jesus Christ, you conquered death and rose from the dead and are alive for evermore.

Help us never to forget your loving presence with us.

Help us to remember

- that you are with us in every time of perplexity to guide and to direct us
- that you are with us in every time of sorrow to comfort and counsel us
- that you are with us in every time of temptation to strengthen and to inspire us
- that you are with us in every time of loneliness to cheer and befriend us.
- that you are with us even in death to bring us to the glory on the other side.

We ask this for your love's sake. Amen.

(based on Barclay)

PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.

For this service you might like to change the first line to: Lord, make me a part of your love story.

Reflect also on the realization that God first gives us peace, love, pardon, faith, hope, light and joy that we can give others.

THE LORD'S PRAYER MEDITATION

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name.

On the cross, while he was dying, Jesus called out to his Father in Heaven. We too can call out to Him any time: when we are feeling pain or feeling joy.

Because God loves us.

Your kingdom come.

When he was dying on the cross, Jesus told one of the thieves being punished with him: 'Today you will be with me in paradise'. He gives us the same promise that his kingdom comes to us and we come into his kingdom.

Because God loves us.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

God wants us all to live with him forever. Jesus' death and resurrection was the way he chose to have that happen. We now can choose to believe it and to obey him here on earth.

Because God loves us.

Give us today our daily bread.

God gives us everything we need. That includes family and friends to love us.

Because God loves us.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Peter tells us: *that all who believe in Jesus — his love and power; his death and life — have their sins forgiven through his name.*

Because God loves us.

Do not bring us to the test, but deliver us from evil.

Our pains are a sign of the evil in our lives and our world. Jesus, through his death and life has delivered us from all evil.

Because God loves us.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.

Amen.

Bible Study

FOR TEENS AND ADULTS

As a group: Begin with a prayer, an invitation to each group member to participate as actively as they choose and the assurance that 'what's said here stays here'.

GETTING STARTED

Individually: Complete as many sections of this grid as you can in two minutes.

	Your Favourite	Your Least Favourite
Love story book		
Love story movie		
Love story song		
Love story -- reality		

As a group: Share your responses from the grid, telling why you made the choices.

GETTING INTO THE SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 15:21,22

Individually: Read this traditional Easter text. Ask yourself 'what's love got to do with it?' or 'what does this have to do with love?'

As a whole group or in pairs: Share your responses.

John 20:1-18

As a whole group: read this traditional Easter text aloud. Have one person read the narration; others read the speeches of Mary, the angel and Jesus.

As a whole group: discuss

The word 'love' is mentioned only once in this passage. Describe that love relationship.

This disciple is also said to be the author of this book of the Bible.

Does that affect your understanding of the relationship?

What un-named love relationships do you find in the passage?

Which of them is the most significant to each group member as an individual? Why?

In pairs: Experiment with different ways of saying Jesus' single word 'Mary'.

See if you can make the single word convey a love story.

Try saying one another's name as you feel Jesus would have conveyed a love story to Mary.

How did hearing her name affect Mary?

What might happen in your life if you heard Jesus saying your name that way every morning?

Mary had a single word response to Jesus.

What love story was reflected in the one word 'Raboni' (which means 'teacher')?

What one word (or very short phrase) response would you make when you heard Jesus say your name?

As a whole group: make a combined list of your responses to Jesus saying your name.

[If you have time] Members of the group can share something from the story that is new to them today — that they can't remember even noticing or reflecting on before.

CLOSING

As a whole group: read this traditional Easter text.

Psalms 118:1,2

Read verse one together, then invite people one by one to respond as the people of Israel do: 'His faithful love continues forever!'

My Love Story Sketch

This sketch is designed as a puppet presentation.

To make puppets, you may use the story figures on page 12 — with or without the heart background and names.

Envelope puppets: enlarge the figures to the size envelope you are using, colour and attach the pictures to envelopes. This forms puppets that puppeteers can wear on their hands.

Poster puppets: enlarge the figures to poster size, colour and mount pictures onto card. Attach a length of wood batten for holding the posters.

Standing puppets: enlarge the figures and print on card. Carefully cut around portions of the figure that are in the top half of the rectangle. Without bending the figure itself, fold back the edge of the top half of the rectangle as a brace to hold up the figure.

Alternatively you might find toys similar to each of the characters and use the toys as puppets. Avoid recognisable 'licensed' characters, eg Disney princesses.

You do not need a 'proper' puppet stage. Puppeteers may operate from behind a table turned on its side or a blanket held up by two helpers.

All the puppeteers are required to do is hold up their puppet at the appropriate time and take it down again.

The same person can speak and handle the puppet, or you can have separate readers and puppeteers. They should not be visible to the congregation.

AN OPTION: rather than using puppets, show images of the characters on screen and have 'voice-over' readers.

PART 1

[Puppets appear one at a time as each speech is read.]

BROWN DEER: My love story is perfect. It's like a dream and I don't want to wake up — ever.

GIRL: My love story hasn't begun yet. I'm just 'wishing and hoping, and thinking and praying, and planning and dreaming' — and nothing happens.

WHITE DEER: My love story started out just fine. But the 'happily ever after' never happened. It was disappointment, hurt, anger, doubts, guilt and a broken heart — ever after.

SMALL GNOME: Love story. That's what it is, a story. People who are supposed to love me turned right away from me. They don't accept my friends, my lifestyle — me.

CAT: My love story was beautiful Just beautiful. And then 'death did us part'. Now I'm empty, lonely and afraid.

LARGE GNOME: Love story. Yuck! Who wants a love story? I can't be bothered with all that lovey-dovey stuff. Give me action and adventure, not love.

RABBIT: My love story seems so one-sided. I give and give and don't get anything back. What's wrong with me?

PART 2

[Puppets appear one at a time as the speeches are read.]

BROWN DEER: When things are going well in my live, Easter shows that God's love is greater than all of this.

GIRL: When I'm waiting for other things, Easter shows that God loves me — unconditionally.

WHITE DEER: When I'm hurt and disappointed, Easter shows that God loves me — and the people who have hurt me.

SMALL GNOME: When other people have given up on me, Easter shows that God loves me — just the way I am.

CAT: When I'm alone and lonely, Easter shows that God loves me — forever.

LARGE GNOME: When I'm looking for challenge and adventure; Easter shows me that love isn't for wusses.

RABBIT: When I'm worn out by un-returned love, Easter shows that God's love is enough.

Puppets appear all at once, nodding slightly as they speak.

BROWN DEER: Easter ...

GIRLS: ...shows us...

WHITE DEER: ...that...

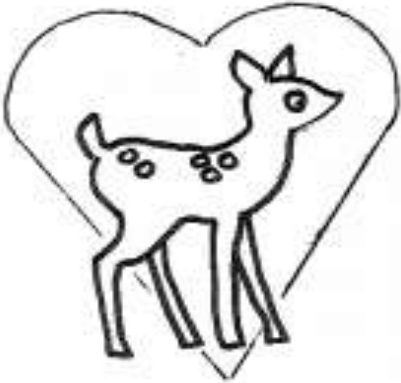
SMALL GNOME: ...all we really need...

CAT: ...is...

LARGE GNOME: ...God's love...

RABBIT: ...in Jesus!

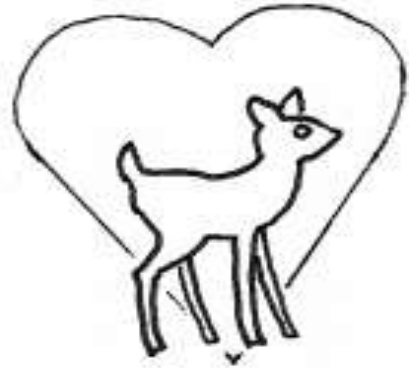
Love Story puppet characters



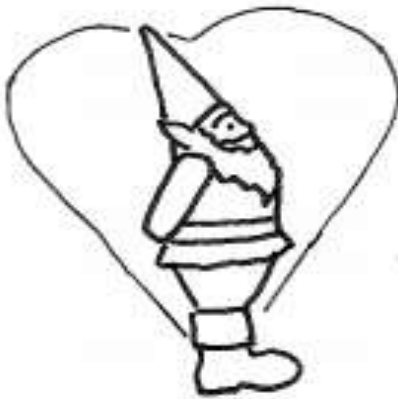
BROWN DEER



GIRL



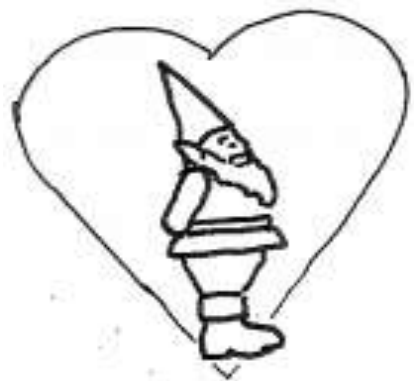
WHITE DEER



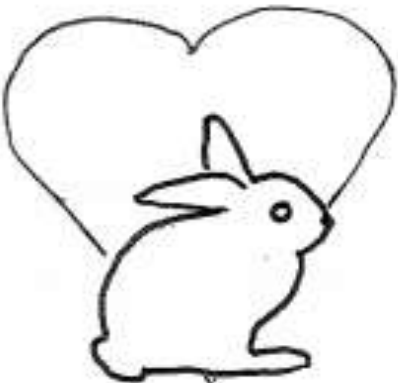
LARGE GNOME



CAT



SMALL GNOME



RABBIT

Love Story colouring page

• Easter. Not your typical love story. •



God's Love

All Together Now
#24

Anonymous

♩ = 128 swing

God's love, that he sent us his Son. God's love, that he sent us his Son. God's

love that he sent us his Son. God's love, God's love that he sent us his Son, God's

love, God's love that he sent us his Son... 2. God's le - lu - jah!

1. (men) God's love
(women) that he sent us his Son.
(3 times)
(all) God's love, God's love
that he sent us his Son. (repeat)

2. (men) God's love
(women) that he died on a cross.
(3 times)
(all) God's love, God's love
that he died on a cross. (repeat)

3. (men) God's love
(women) that he rose up again.
(3 times)
(all) God's love, God's love
that he rose up again. (repeat)

4. (men) God's love
(women) that he's living today.
(3 times)
(all) God's love, God's love
that he's living today.. (repeat)

5. (men) God's love
(women) that he will come again.
(3 times)
(all) God's love, God's love
that he will come again. (repeat)

6. (men) God's love
(women) Hallelujah!
(3 times)
(all) God's love, God's love
Hallelujah! (repeat)

Easter. Not your typical love story.



SAMPLE WORSHIP PLAN

Suggested wording for some sections is printed in *italics*.

Bible quotations are from 'The Message' by Eugene Peterson.

You may use another contemporary translation.

1. ARRIVAL, BEFORE WORSHIP

HOSPITALITY TEAM greets people as they arrive. They demonstrate love and care for both regular worshippers and visitors by

- saying 'Happy Easter'
- helping people find appropriate seats
- giving them any materials they need for worship and generally helping them get settled.

Then they give each person a heart and something to write with.

Have hearts pre-cut from red craft foam (or card), 10cm wide or larger. Check to see that the biro or markers you supply actually write well (and don't smear) on the foam or card. You will also need a basket (or wheelbarrow) at the front of the worship area with spare hearts.

MUSIC TEAM may play quietly familiar love song melodies (not necessarily Christian).

TECH TEAM: may show the postcard image and or some 'love' images from the internet.

2. WELCOME

WORSHIP LEADER: *Welcome to our Easter celebration.*

We're here to get involved in a great love-story. We believe that God is the author and main character in that great love story, and that God is here with us as we worship.

But first let's listen to some typical love stories.

3. TYPICAL LOVE STORIES

PUPPET SKETCH, part 1 — see page 11 for script.

WORSHIP LEADER: *Some of those stories give a disappointing picture of love. I wonder if you can relate to any of them. Which story is the most like your own story?*

[You may allow a bit of time for people to think about the question or talk about it with people sitting near them.]

4. INTRODUCING 'GOD'S LOVE STORY'

BIBLE READER comes to the front carrying a large book/Bible labelled 'God's Love Story'. (see page 3).

BIBLE READER *I've got a different love story. It's not your typical love story.*

The writer of this story says 'Come to me all you who are weary and broken hearted. I will give you peace and show you real love.'

BIBLE READER places the book on a lectern or music stand where it will be visible throughout the service.

If the name on the book is hidden by the furniture, have a hanging on the lectern showing 'God's Love Story' and the heart-in-hand logo.

WORSHIP LEADER: *As we get ready to sing about God's love, you may like to write 'God's Love' on the red heart you were given when you came in.*

5. OPENING SONG

TECH TEAM may display a slide with the words of the song, while

MUSIC TEAM leads the congregation in singing God's Love (see page 13)



**GOD'S LOVE STORY:
PROLOGUE**

6. BACKGROUND DISCUSSION

TECH TEAM displays the above heading.

BIBLE READER (turning to the start of the Bible): *God's love story begins 'In the beginning'. In the Beginning God created the world and everything in it. Everything was good.'*

RESPONDER gives a big 'isn't that lovely' sigh and may signal congregation to do the same.

Throughout the service the 'responder' stands or sits near the front and expresses a response to what is said — a bit like the chorus in an old Greek drama. The responder may also encourage response from the rest of the congregation.

BIBLE READER: *God loved the perfect world, especially the people. But . . .*

RESPONDER gives a big 'uh-oh' and may signal congregation to do the same.

WORSHIP LEADER: *Things got messed up — really messed up, people stopped loving God. They started to hurt one another.*

The world wasn't perfect — not the way God intended. People weren't perfect — not the way God intended them to be. People chose to hurt and be hurt, suffer and cause suffering, die and cause death.

RESPONDER: *NO! Why would a loving God let that happen?*

WORSHIP LEADER: *Good question. Great question! People have been asking it for ages and we don't have an answer that satisfies everyone.*

RESPONDER gives a disappointed 'Oh' sigh and may encourage the congregation to do the same.

WORSHIP LEADER: *But we do know that God doesn't stop loving his hurting world and his hurting people. In fact, God had a way of fixing things.*



GOD'S LOVE STORY: CHAPTER 1 HE SENT US HIS SON

7. GOD SENT HIS SON

TECH TEAM may display the above heading.

BIBLE READER (from the Bible): *This is how God showed his love for us. God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.* (from 1 John 4)

WORSHIP LEADER: *We acknowledge God's loving gift of his Son every year at Christmas time.*

RESPONDER: *Mmmmm, yes, the sweet little baby in a manger.*

WORSHIP LEADER: *We know that baby Jesus grew up as a human being. He experienced fun and scrapes like every human child. He experienced hurts and challenges like every human adolescent. He experienced friendships and betrayal, successes and hurts like every human young adult.*

BIBLE READER (from the Bible): *'You know the story . . . It began in Galilee. . . Jesus arrived from Nazareth, anointed by God with the Holy Spirit, ready for action. He went through the country helping people and healing everyone who was beaten down by the Devil. He was able to do all this because God was with him.'* (from Acts 10)

8. RESPONSES: GOD SENT HIS SON

RESPONDER: *Jesus would have been an amazing guy to have for a friend!*

WORSHIP LEADER: *You may like to write the words: 'He sent us his Son' on your red heart as a reminder of Chapter 1 of the story. Or you may just draw another heart inside your heart.*

While people are writing **MUSIC TEAM** (INSTUMENTALISTS) play once through 'God's love'.



GOD'S LOVE STORY: CHAPTER 2 HE DIED ON A CROSS

9. CRUCIFIXION

TECH TEAM may display the above heading.

BIBLE READER (from the Bible): *And we saw it, saw it all. Everything he did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem where they killed him, hung him from a cross.* (from Acts 10)

RESPONDER: *How could they? Why?*

TECH TEAM shows a slide of the crucifixion.

Allow a few minutes while people can simply look at the image.

WORSHIP LEADER: *We remember the death of God's beloved Son every year on Good Friday.*

RESPONDER: *It's so sad and appalling!*

BIBLE READER: *But it was God's way of showing how much he loves us. Long before he died, Jesus said (from the Bible): This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends.* (from John 15)

RESPONDER: *I don't deserve that kind of love; not what he went through!*

WORSHIP LEADER: *That's just the point.*

Let's recap the story so far:
 Even though we don't deserve it . . .
 God loves people.
 People mess up.
 God still loves people
 but lets people choose to turn against God
 and against one another.
 People suffer and die.
 God still loves people.
 God breaks the cycle — by dying himself.

STORY RESPONDER: Would you repeat that, please.

TECH TEAM displays each phrase as the **STORY RESPONDER** reads and encouraged people to read along.

[Alternatively, each of the puppet characters could read one line.]

10. RESPONSE TO CRUCIFIXION

MUSIC TEAM performs or leads the congregation in singing a sombre song relating to the crucifixion, eg *What wondrous love is this?*

WORSHIP LEADER: *You may like to write the words: 'He died on a cross' on your red heart as a reminder of Chapter 2 of the story. Or you may just draw another heart inside your heart.*

While people are writing **MUSIC TEAM** (INSTUMENTALISTS) play once through 'God's love'.

WORSHIP LEADER: *But that's not the end of God's love story.*



GOD'S LOVE STORY: CHAPTER 3 HE ROSE UP AGAIN

11. RESURRECTION

TECH TEAM may display the above heading.

BIBLE READER (from the Bible): *Peter continued: But in three days God had him up, alive, and out where he could be seen. Not everyone saw him. . . We were the ones there to eat and drink with him after he came back from the dead. He commissioned us to announce this in public, to bear solemn witness that he is in fact, the One whom God destined as Judge of the living and the dead. (from Acts 10)*

TECH TEAM shows a slide of the resurrection, possibly of Jesus with the disciples, showing his wounded hand to Thomas.

Allow a few minutes while people can simply look at the image.

12. RESPONSE TO: RESURRECTION

RESPONDER: Awesome!

WORSHIP LEADER: On Easter we celebrate that God's beloved Son came back to life.

RESPONDER: *Hallelujah!* And may encourage the congregation to raise their hands and hearts and repeat 'Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!'

OR

MUSIC TEAM leads the congregation in singing *Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia (Arnold)*

WORSHIP LEADER: *Yes, this certainly is not your typical love story. Even at this point God's love for us in Jesus was so great that Jesus came back into human lives; spent more time with people — so that we would be sure that the story is true!*

WORSHIP LEADER: *You may like to write the words: 'He rose up again' on your red heart as a reminder of Chapter 3 of the story. Or you may just draw another heart inside your heart.*

While people are writing **MUSIC TEAM** (INSTUMENTALISTS) play once through 'God's love'.



GOD'S LOVE STORY: CHAPTER 4 HE'S LIVING TODAY

13. READING: ALIVE TODAY

TECH TEAM may display the above heading.

BIBLE READER (from the Bible): *[Jesus said to John]: 'Don't fear: I am First, I am Last. I'm Alive. I died, but I came to life, and my life is not forever.'* (from Revelations 1)

14. MY STORY TODAY

This is the perfect opportunity to have a short love story 'testimony' from someone who can tell a personal story of experiencing the love of the living Lord Jesus.

To assist the speaker, format could be an interview conducted by the **WORSHIP LEADER**.

15. RESPONSE/CREED

WORSHIP LEADER: *For hundreds of years Christians have reminded themselves of this story with a simple statement.*

TECH TEAM may display the following words.

STORY RESPONDER invites the congregation to join in reading if they are comfortable doing so:

I believe in Jesus Christ,
God's only Son, our Lord.
He ... suffered under Pontius Pilate:
was crucified, dead and buried.
On the third day he rose from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God.
... He will come to judge the living and the dead.
(The Apostles Creed).

WORSHIP LEADER: *You may like to write the words: 'He's living today' on your red heart as a reminder of Chapter 4 of the story. Or you may just draw another heart inside your heart.*

While people are writing **MUSIC TEAM** (INSTUMENTALISTS) play once through 'God's love'.



GOD'S LOVE STORY: EPILOGUE FOR YOU AND FOR ME

[This is an additional verse, not included in the music on page 13.]

16. MY LOVE STORY SKETCH, PART 2

TECH TEAM may display the above heading.

WORSHIP LEADER: One of the amazing things about God's love is that it is for every-one and for each-one. It really is for you and me.

PUPPET SKETCH, part 2 — see page 11 for script.

17. SONG

MUSIC TEAM: Performs or leads the congregation in singing 'Draw me close to you/You're all I want.

TECH TEAM: displays words of the song.

18. RESPONSE: FOR ME AND YOU

WORSHIP LEADER: *You may like to write the words: 'for you and for me' on your red heart as a reminder of the story. Or you may just draw another heart inside your heart.*

While people are writing **MUSIC TEAM** (INSTUMENTALISTS) play once through 'God's love'.

READER (from the Bible): *John wrote: 'My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. ... This is the kind of love we are talking about: that God loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.*

My dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us – perfect love.' (from 1 John 4)

RESPONDER: *So . . . when I have God's love (hold up a red heart). I can give it away — I can love other people.*

Give the heart to someone.

- If that person exchanges hearts with you continue.
- If the person keeps the heart, take another from a basket of spare hearts and continue.

God's love won't get used up. God will give me more and more of his love as I give away more and more of it to other people.

What I'd like you to do now is to give away your red heart to someone near you and explain to them what it represents.

While people are doing this **MUSIC TEAM** may perform the secular 'Love isn't love till you give it away'; either the *Sound of Music* version or the Reba McIntyre version.

HOSPITALITY TEAM circulates with spare hearts to make sure that everyone has one.

19. OFFERING

WORSHIP LEADER (or a congregational leader): *One of the ways this congregation shares and gives away the love that God has given us is through money offerings that are used for . . .*

(Explain briefly how the offerings are used to help people. If there is a special cause supported through an Easter offering, explain it.)

You have an opportunity to give an offering now, if you wish to do so.

The offering is collected in your usual manner.

20. SONG DURING OR AFTER THE OFFERING

As the offering is collected the **MUSIC TEAM** may do an Easter performance item or lead the congregation in singing: *Your love surrounds me* (R Mann) or *Forever loved by you* (G Bullock).

21. PRAYERS

PRAYER LEADER/s lead worshipers in general prayers for themselves and others and/or a special Easter prayer (see page 9) and/or The Lord's Prayer.

TECH TEAM displays words of any prayers people are to join in.

22. SENDING AND BLESSING

WORSHIP LEADER: *Easter — Ever so much greater than your typical love story!*

Please take your red heart home with you. Keep it as a reminder of all we have said and done here today. Or give it away to someone else and tell them about it.

More importantly, as you go now, take God's love into your heart, your life, your family and your world.

23. CLOSING SONG

TECH TEAM may display a slide with the words of the song, while

MUSIC TEAM leads the congregation in singing a joyful Easter song, eg *I know he rescued my soul / My redeemer lives* (Morgan) or *Yours (Thine) is the glory* (Budry)

24. AFTER WORSHIP

Worshippers are invited to the room where tea, coffee and fruit cordial are available along with some Easter cake or hot cross buns.

You may organise an Easter egg hunt or other games for children (and adults!)