



Transforming Worship conference

Three sessions about the creative arts in worship

Reshaping a church through the arts

The Corner UC, Warradale SA

Mark Hewitt

The normal for Sunday morning worship is a set of multi-activity stations: colouring sheets for all ages, and the option to move between stations and seats during the course of worship. There are also knitting baskets – knitters make woollen squares that are later sewn together into blankets/rugs. People are also encouraged to bring their own knitting, crochet, etc.

The beginnings of this were a few years ago, and coincided with the joining of two congregations as the people of a nearby, closing, congregation came to The Corner. The Church Councils of both congregations were closed and disbanded, and a single Council with members drawn from the two groups was elected. Other changes were made as well.

The Vision Statement of The Corner is “Faith intersecting life”.

The congregations Mission is – to foster intergenerational community.

A key biblical reference is Luke ch 4 – the Spirit among the people to bring life etc etc, and demonstrated among those likely to be considered to be “outsiders”.

Some key matters of administration:

- There are 4 types of worship service [not all run every week]
- The Church Council is the Treasurer
- Council does not have a formally-elected Chairperson – the task rotates among the members
- The budget is a Mission and Ministry budget.

The change to all this was a risky thing to do – but it was accomplished and now the congregation is comfortable with taking risks. And this is a group mostly aged 80+.

Sunday 10.00 am

The “usual” along with colouring, craft activities

Tables placed across the back of the worship space, all occupied with *adults*

- Kids read the Bible lessons
- The unpredictability of attendance does not shape the activities – people just do whatever is appropriate anyway
- There are links between Sunday and the other services: Messy Church, Blank Canvass, Thin Space and kids’ performing arts group.
- As a result, people now understand that the church is not just Sunday mornings – that time is just one part of the church.
- An hour on Sunday morning will never tick all the boxes for every person all the time
- The alternative services all have separate teams – and meet as often as can be arranged; for example, Messy Church runs every 5 weeks or so.

Thin Place

- 6-8 per year
- 3 hours to set up and 3 to pack up
- A quiet space – no talking – for the full hour
- Music and mots and lots of visuals
- Prayer stations

Breakfast

- 4 or so per year
- For dechurched and unchurched
- Café church style

Corner Kids Performing Arts

- Weekly
- Active learning

Blank Canvass café

- Monthly on a Saturday
- Target – youth and young adults
- Explore life and faith through the arts, food and community
- 10 minutes introduction then 1 – 1½ hours' activity (or not – as attenders choose), then small group discussion for a few minutes

Community art and craft

- Wednesday mornings and afternoons

Corner Café

- Art works on display always
- Now open in January and other school holidays
- Kids as servers, some on formal Work Experience

Digital presence

- Faith formation materials are included

^ All programmes are subjected to constant review

^ This all started because they discovered in a visioning process that they had a number of people in the congregation with a passion for various of the arts.

A new and recent development is that similar activities are now happening around food.

Note especially – they can do this, as a congregation, because they have the assets.

Seasons and Celebrations

Brougham Place UC, North Adelaide, SA
Jenni and John Hughes

A key driver – God is creator, we are co-creators

1 Seasons

Advent / Christmas, Lent / Easter

There are separate teams for each season

Each team meets just twice: quite early, then quite close to the day

An Advent calendar in church became a set of 4 doors:

A Christmas giraffe [!!] suggested by a child

Adult participation in the nativity play

Peace cranes

Lent / Easter

A river with a path that changes from week to week

Lanterns

Creation

Earth Air Fire Water

Using items from one's own back yard

2 One-off events

Pentecost

Stations – every person's contribution matters

Children's Sunday

Bible-based story to start things, followed by an emerging methodology

How to do all this

- Every-member ministry
- A space for theological thinking
- Honouring every contribution
- Worship that is artistic is inductive and exploratory – they never know quite how things will turn out
- A celebration of beauty
- Giving life to stories and creating space for "stories to be born in us"

BUT not every week can be a Super Sunday

** What are the High Days in your local congregation?

Creative Design for worship

Newlife Church on the Gold Coast

From the inside front cover of the worship team booklet:

*The beauty in all art comes from an ability
to re-imagine the everyday.
Art represents the familiar in an unfamiliar way.
It brings new and unique perspectives that challenge
preconceptions and inspire the imagination.*

*Great art engages the intellect,
stirs the emotion, and demands a response.*

*... Emotion is what moves
us from apathy to action. As subjective as all art is,
great art cannot leave us indifferent, it demands of us a
response.*

A 5-minutes or so video plays before worship every week. It's done on a mobile phone app ["8mm"] so anybody can record it. A new video is produced every 12 months. Software and training to use it are free or very cheap, at lynda.com .

But always remember it is an offering to God, not for the praise and self-aggrandisement of the producer.

Why is creativity so often tied to worship? Because not least it's an extension of God's creative actions.

Tap into the people in the community who have the gifts.

Select the topic first, then brainstorm in a group, and in casual conversations.

Be very, very careful about copyright – and be respectful of artists anyway.

unsplash.com [or .com.au]

pixabay.com

Easter 2017

Across the weekend about 3000 people attended services: about ½ were visitors or annual Easter attenders.

So: Romans 5:18-19 – roughly “just as one man's disobedience brought death to everyone, so one man's obedience brought life to everyone” – how on earth could they make sense of that to people who don't know anything?

Why did Jesus have to die?

What do our Christian answers actually mean??

The notion of “one for all” was followed.

How does a church get its name and logo noticed amid all the other stuff?

Know your audience – including through pastoral care and keeping relationships healthy

Get the theme / key message tightly defined: eg “every person is a manger – is there room in your heart for Jesus?”

An aside – what does the entrance foyer look like?

Allow lots and lots and lots of hours for preparation.