

OUTLINE FOR ALL-AGE WORSHIP

Before the service, have an assortment of lights (nightlight/LED candle, torch, lantern etc.) displayed on a table at the front.

Call to Worship

In Matthew 18, Jesus said ‘where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.’ There’s more than two or three of us here. Let’s welcome Jesus with a shout – 1,2,3 welcome Jesus! (You could teach the Makaton signs for welcome: hold hands out, palm upward, then bend fingers up at 90 degrees twice; and Jesus: use the index fingers of each hand in turn, starting with your dominant hand, to touch the centre of the opposite palm – here) and let’s welcome one another by saying hello or good morning.

Hymn

Lord, the light of your love is shining (Graham Kendrick) or *Colours of Day* (Sue McClellan, John Paculabo, Keith Rycroft).

Prayers of Adoration and Approach

Talk 1

Pre-arrange for someone to have an alarm on their phone or watch to go off at the beginning of the introduction. (Do not make this so loud that it makes people jump as some people may be extra sensitive to loud noises.) The person should turn it off and apologise, saying that they were afraid they might drop off to sleep during the service!

(At this point you could encourage everyone to join in with the video for Wake up, Wake up https://youtu.be/QqgSd_TFiEE)

Ask who was woken by an alarm clock that morning, or how did they wake? Who finds it easy to get up in the morning and what does it feel like when you’re struggling to wake? Is it easier to wake up when the mornings are lighter? At this time of year we’re heading into darker mornings, how does that make you feel?

Does anyone remember anything Jesus said about light? (Suggestions may include “I am the light of the world” or “don’t hide your light under a bushel”). We’re going to be thinking about a different passage in the Bible today as we celebrate Education Sunday, and we’re going to think some more about darkness and light. Teaching and learning is often described as a way of bringing light into dark places, bringing opportunity and understanding and encouraging people to grow. But God’s light is important in bringing opportunity and understanding and encouraging people to grow too! Let’s say sorry to God for those times when we forget those gifts.

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Pray of confession

Hymn

Light of the World you stepped down into darkness (Tim Hughes) or similar.

Reading Romans 13: 8-12

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. ¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²The night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. (New Revised Standard Version Anglicised)

Or

⁸Let love be your only debt! If you love others, you have done all that the Law demands. ⁹In the Law there are many commands, such as, "Be faithful in marriage. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not want what belongs to others." But all of these are summed up in the command that says, "Love others as much as you love yourself." ¹⁰No one who loves others will harm them. So love is all that the Law demands. ¹¹You know what sort of times we live in, and so you should live properly. It is time to wake up. You know that the day when we will be saved is nearer now than when we first put our faith in the Lord. ¹²Night is almost over, and day will soon appear. We must stop behaving as people do in the dark and be ready to live in the light. (Contemporary English Version)

Talk 2

(Give everyone a glowstick to hold.) It's the start of a new school year and today is Education Sunday. Education Sunday is the time when we think about all those involved in teaching and learning, in schools and colleges, nurseries and universities, online or in person, no matter how old or young you are. Put your hand up if you're still learning. And put your hand up if you have things you can teach others. It's sort of about everybody here, if you think of it. We never stop learning. Education is more than just what we learn in school, although that's really important, and there are loads of different ways of teaching and loads of different ways of learning.

Talk for a moment with the people sitting nearest to you and share – what is your favourite way of learning? Has anyone taught you something you'll never forget?

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Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, 1918–2004, President of the United Arab Emirates for 33 years said: *“Education is like a lantern which lights your way in a dark alley. The more we learn, the more we understand about how the world works, what makes us and other people tick. We learn who to trust and who not to trust, how to think about what people tell us instead and question and research to find out what’s true rather than just taking their word for it. Like armour, it protects us from being tricked or misled”,* and Nelson Mandela once said, *“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*

I wonder what are the dark places where we need to bring light in our community, our schools, our workplaces, our world. (Collect suggestions on a flipchart or, if possible, use [mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com) to allow people to make suggestions via mobile phone and the results appear in a word cloud on the screen).

Now, what qualities can we show that help us to live how Jesus calls us to live, taking God’s light into the dark places. What can we do to make a difference? (Collect suggestions as above.)

If we light a candle, it pushes back the darkness. Sometimes we might feel too small to make a difference (Snap one glowstick) but Jesus doesn’t call us to do it on our own. Remember what we said in the beginning of our worship about two or three gathering together in Jesus’s name. Let’s see what happens if we all snap our glowsticks – as we all reflect the light of Jesus together, we can change the world.

Hymn

Hymn This little light of mine – as a prayer - https://youtu.be/piOmWzg_1-c Sing it once through, then for the second verse sing: *“Shine it in my...I’m gonna let it shine”* and get everyone to shout out where they will shine their light, e.g. school, home, workplace, supermarket. Third time – say what you’re going to do to shine the love of Jesus so *“I’m gonna...”*

Verse one: This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine, (x3)

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Chorus: This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine, (x3) (clap along this time)

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Verse two: Shine it in my...I’m gonna let it shine, (x3)

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Chorus

Verse three: I’m gonna...I’m gonna let it shine, (x3)

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Chorus

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Prayers for Teachers and Learners

Hymn

Arise, Shine, your light has come (Graham Kendrick) or *I am a city on the hill* (Becky Drake) or similar.

Prayers of Intercession and Supplication

Hymn

Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart or *The spirit lives to set us free* or similar.

Blessing

Share the grace together (<https://youtu.be/MD5DEy0rI7Y> - maybe use Makaton).

Prayer of Confession

Jesus, you once said that it was no good having a light and then hiding it away.

You want us to be like a light, shining into the dark places of our world.

You want us to be your messengers, bringing news of truth and hope and comfort.

You want us to speak out when things aren't right and stand up for justice.

We are sorry for the times when we hide that light away or are embarrassed to share it.

Forgive us when we could make a difference but choose not to, or don't even notice what's needed.

Fill us with your light and the confidence to do what you call us to do.

Thank you that you never give up on us and are always ready to forgive and to bless us.

Amen

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Alternative Prayer of Confession

Choose some volunteers to hold torches they turn on and off, or candles they light and blow out. Light for the lighter type lines, dark for the darker type. Alternatively, encourage the congregation to put their hands over their eyes for the darkness and remove them and lift their hands up towards heaven for the light. Encourage everyone to say the words: **“Forgive us and fill us with your light.”**

You are the light of the world.

But sometimes we hide away in the darkness because following you is too much effort.

Forgive us and fill us with your light.

Sometime we think the darkness will hide the things we don't want you to see, like the times we're less than kind, or less than honest, or less than forgiving.

Forgive us and fill us with your light.

Sometimes we use the darkness to stop us needing to do the things we know we ought to do.

Forgive us and fill us with your light.

Amen

Prayer of Approach and Adoration

Great and loving God, we have come here this morning to bring you our praises,

To sing and to pray together, to learn and to share together.

We are your children, your family.

We know that you promised

That whenever two or three get together to worship you,

you'll be there, right in the midst of them.

So we take a moment to remember that.

Creator God, we worship you for all that you have made.

Saviour Jesus, we thank you for relationship, forgiveness, healing and love.

Holy Spirit, inspire us and encourage us and help us remember you are always with us, wherever we go and whatever we do.

Amen

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Alternative Prayer of Approach and Adoration

(Stand up or wave your arms in the air or shout "that's me" whenever you hear something that describes you.)

Here we are, God. Your family.

Some tall, some short, some younger, some older,

Some sleepy, some lively, some with glasses, some without,

Some with blue eyes, some with grey hair, some with family, some alone,

Some who like chocolate, some who even like brussels sprouts.

Each one unique but all your children and loved by you.

We bring you our thanks and our praises, our songs and our worship.

And as we gather here today, clothe us from head to toe in your light.

Amen

Prayer of Intercession

PRAYER (Sharon Lloyd)

God of goodness and hope, God shining bright,

When despair weighs heavily on us, remind us of our hope in you,

When we see despair in others let us share that hope with them,

When darkness overshadows us, guide us to your light,

When we see others in dark places let your light shine through us like the brightest star,

When we feel weak, tired and worn out, fill us with your strength,

When we see others feeling weak, let us name them to you asking you send your strength to uplift them also.

When we feel alone, stir our hearts with your message of love and protection, showing us that you are there Lord, you are our guide and our shield.

When we feel in the minority, as though our voice and thoughts are so small, send others to stand with us,

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When we see others feeling alone let us stand together united in you, knowing where one or two gather you are there.

Fill our hearts, our minds and our bodies with love for you and for one another.

Amen

Alternative Prayer of Intercession

Give each person a scratch-art card star. Think of situations where you would like Jesus's light to shine. Maybe people or places you know where there is fighting or need, anxiety or worry, sadness or loneliness. Draw with the scraper on the star, or write, either the issue you want to pray for or what you would like God to bring to that situation.

In the centre of the room or on a table, have a tray covered with aluminium foil and in the centre of the tray stand a large candle or lantern, or LED candle.

People can bring their stars and place them around the light source.

Prayers for Teachers and Learners

At the start of a new school year, we pray for all teachers and learners.

May they start each day clothed in your light.

May teachers see the needs of each individual and remain patient and insightful and true to their calling. May they find rest and encouragement and chance to stay fresh and keep learning as well as giving. May they know that, even when things seem hard, they are making a lasting difference and giving people the tools to change the world for the better.

Jesus, **clothe them in your light.**

May learners see the opportunities before them and be blessed with teachers who find the right way for them to learn. May they be compassionate and supportive to those who learn alongside them. May they grow in confidence and wisdom as well as just knowledge, and inspire them to use what they learn to help others.

Jesus, **clothe them in your light.**

May we all keep on learning, never resting on our laurels but open to new opportunities, questioning and searching, and seeking to know you more. May we seek out the dark places where your light is needed. Grant us the courage to step forward and make a difference.

Jesus, **clothe us in your light.** *Amen*