

A service to celebrate the role of the laity in worship
Some ideas to enliven the celebration

- Pianist/ musicians to choose the hymns
- Congregation to choose the “incidental” music
- Offering: ask people to write down on a piece of paper how they contribute to worship each week eg coming along, donating to the offering, helping with morning tea, etc. If you want to save time, you could have a pre-prepared tick box sheet with space at the bottom to add extras.
- Readings/ Sermon: Invite four or five Bible readers to read a favourite passage and say why it is their favourite.
- Or Readings/Sermon: Get two Bible readers to read their favourite passage and then ask the congregation to share in small groups where they are sitting their favourite reading/ verse/ story from the Bible.
- Prayer for others: Ask a group or several groups within the church to write on post-it notes the things that they are concerned about that they want to tell God about. A representative from each group might share these and post them on a board. prayer tree/ whatever. Then a simple concluding prayer could be offered gathering up the concerns.
- Hymns/Songs: “I am the church, you are the church”, “We are many, we are one”.

The day the children led worship: A children’s story

(Substitute the names in italics with names suitable for your congregation)

The *Mitchell* children arrived at church. Their Mum had dropped them off and said she’d be back later to pick her up. She had to go and see Grandma and sort out her shopping because Grandma was sick. The children went in through the church door and they saw Dan (*the minister*). “Hello” he said. “No Mum today?” “No” said the children and explained where Mum was. “Well, I’m glad to see you anyway”, said *Dan*, “because lots of people are away today and I am going to need helpers”. “We love to help”, said the children, and very soon they were giving hymn books and notices to people at the door. Soon people were sitting in the church but there was quite a big problem. Where was the power point man? And where was the pianist? “What should we do?” *Dan* wondered. “Where can they be?” “I reckon I know”, said *Lily*. “The Crusaders won the rugby last night. Maybe they all went out to a big party!” “Well, they didn’t invite me” said *Dan*. “Just as well. Maybe you wouldn’t be here either!”, said *Emma*. “We can manage without a power point just this once. And I think we can manage without music. At Pre-school Music we have shakers. Maybe we could use the shakers instead.” “Let’s give it a try”, said *Dan*, so they did. The hymn did sound a bit funny because everyone started on a different note, but the shakers kept them in time very well. And just towards the end of the first verse, *Murray* the pianist arrived and was able to give them a note to start the second verse. That helped an awful lot.

But now another problem came to light. *Dan* was the minister – that was for certain sure – but it was actually his Sunday off and he hadn't prepared a service. And lots of other people were going to take the service but they hadn't come yet. What would they do? What about the prayers and the Bible readings and the talk? What were they going to do about that? The children thought very hard, "Praying is just talking to God, isn't it?" they asked *Dan*. "Yes", he replied. "So why don't we all just call out the things we want to say thank you to God for, and then shout out a big Thank you?" suggested *Emma* – so they did. And then they asked God to help with all the things they were worried about, and they told God that God was pretty cool, and that sorted the prayers. Then the children had a great idea for the talk. "Why don't you grown-ups tell the people next to you your favourite Bible story and all about it?" The people didn't think that was too hard, and very soon the church was really noisy as everyone shared their best parts of the Bible. Then they had the offering – but the people weren't there to gather it up, so the children had to do that too. They sang one more hymn – All things bright and beautiful – because it was *Lily's* favourite and then *Dan* gave the blessing. But before he did, he asked all the people to give a big clap for the *Mitchell* children because without all their great ideas, there might not have been a service. After the service, the people were hanging out for a cup of tea, and guess what? The cup of tea people weren't there either. But then *Kath Newton* arrived and she's great at organising things, so very soon the kettle was boiling and everyone was drinking tea and chatting. And where were the children? They were so tired after all their hard work organising the service that they were stretched out sound asleep on the front row of seats. When Mum came to pick them up, that's where she found them. "What happened to make you so tired?" she asked. "We had an awful lot of work to do this morning", replied *Emma*. "It was fun, but church is best when everyone does their part. It's too hard for just a few children. You need a whole lot of people." "Yes", said Mum, "We really do need a team of people to make worship work."