

Short All Age Worship Service

(ShortAAW012)

**The Big Story of God 12:
The Church is the
People of God**

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THE BIG STORY OF GOD 12

THE CHURCH IS THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Service Aim:

To teach what the church is and what its purpose is today.

This service can be used on its own or as part of a series of services covering major biblical themes from Genesis to Revelation.

Biblical Reference(s):

1 Peter 2:4-5, 9, Ephesians 2:19-22, Matthew 3:16-17, Mark 16:15

Outline of Service:

Welcome:	Introduce the theme
Opening Prayer:	Matthew 18:20 and prayer
Opening songs:	<u>A couple of songs to draw people into worship</u> (See Appendix 1)
Quiz:	“What is this?” (Looking at objects in close-up.) What is the Church?
Bible Reading:	1 Peter 2:4-5
Talk 1:	The Church is the people of God. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the purpose of the Church? UP, IN and OUT • 1) Worshipping God (UP)
Song:	<u>Songs worshipping God</u> (See Appendix 1)
Talk 2:	What is the purpose of the Church? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing a God-like community on earth (IN) (Using Rublev’s icon) • Sharing the Good News about Jesus (OUT) (Using sweets)
Prayers:	Praying about the purposes of the Church ie UP, IN and OUT
Lord’s Prayer	
Summary:	The Church is the people of God. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The church has the purposes of Worshipping God, Growing a God-like community and Sharing the Good News about Jesus.
Response:	Laying stones at the foot of the cross as a way of saying, “I belong”
Final song:	<u>Final song</u> (See Appendix 1)
Blessing:	Numbers 6:24-26

Notes for the service:

General notes and instructions for the service are in black font.

Prayers or responses said by the congregation together are in bold purple font.

The full script of a talk or other activity is in purple font.

.....

Welcome:

Welcome everyone to the service. Explain that the theme of the service is “The Church.” If you are using this service as part of the series: “The Big Story of God”, explain that too.

Opening Prayer:

You may choose to open the service with:

- an informal prayer
- a prayer from a book like “New Patterns for Worship”¹ that the congregation can say together,
- or the following verse and prayer:

Jesus said, *“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them”*
(Matthew 18:20)

As you promise to be with us Lord Jesus,
We welcome you here today.

**Help us Lord to worship you,
To listen to your Word,
And to pray in faith,
That we might grow in our love for you and for one another.
Amen.**

Opening Songs:

A couple of songs to draw people into worship as per Appendix 1

Quiz:

The “What is this?” quiz involves showing four pictures of everyday objects in close-up and inviting the congregation to guess what they are. This would work best if the pictures are projected. Some examples of pictures are given in Appendix 2. The purpose of this quiz is to show that sometimes we think we know what something is, but we can get it wrong. This applies to the church; we might think we know what the church is, but we can get that wrong. You could run the quiz in the following way:

Today I have a quiz called “What is this?”

- I am going to show you some pictures of everyday objects in close up. See if you can guess what they are.

What is this? *(Show picture 1 in Appendix 2) Any ideas? (Receive suggestions)*

- It is actually one of the following: a candle stick, a piece of spaghetti, or lip balm. Which of those do you think it is?
- It is a piece of spaghetti.

¹ Church House Publishing – ISBN 0715120603
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What is this? (Show picture 2 in Appendix 2) Any ideas? (Receive suggestions)

- It is actually one of the following: Carpet, a teabag or cotton wool. Which of those do you think it is?
- It is a teabag

What is this? (Show picture 3 in Appendix 2) Any ideas? (Receive suggestions)

- It is actually one of the following: An apple stalk or a cigarette end or a twig. Which of those do you think it is?
- It is an apple stalk

And finally what is this? (Show picture 4 in Appendix 2) Any ideas? (Receive suggestions)

- It is actually one of the following: Bubble wrap, crystal glass or soap foam. Which of those do you think it is?
- It is soap foam

Sometimes we think we know what something is but we may get it wrong.

- If I asked you today the question, “What is the church?” I wonder what you might say.
- We may all think we know what the church is, but we may get it wrong, like we did with some of the pictures we have just looked at.
- Let’s hear what the Bible says the church is as we have our first reading.

Bible Reading:

The Bible reading is 1 Peter 2:4-5 and can be read by a child, young person or adult.

“As you come to Jesus, the living Stone —rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:4-5)

Talk1:

For this talk you will need a cross and some willing volunteers!

We are going to build a church now, and then we can see if we all have the right picture of what the church is.

- Our reading says that our church begins with Jesus, the living stone, the most important stone of all.
- Because we can’t see Jesus, although He is alive, I have brought along a cross which reminds us of Jesus and what He has done for us, as the cross and resurrection are actually the foundation of the church – the Cornerstone. (Hold up cross)
- Let’s put Jesus here. (Place cross on a table so that it is very visible and where people can gather around it)

The reading then says that as people come to Jesus, they too become like living stones that God puts together to build His church.

- I am going to call out some of your names now. When I call out your name I would like you to come forward and gather around this cross.

(Call out approximately twelve people ensuring that your volunteers are a mixture of people of different sexes, ages, nationalities etc. Position your people around the cross so that they form a couple of fairly haphazard circles.....make sure that there are gaps in the circles, signifying that there is space for other people to join in.)

Great – we have our church.....a group of people of different ages and backgrounds,

- With different life experiences and gifts, who have all come to Jesus to receive forgiveness of their sins and his gift of life.

So if I asked you to draw a picture of the church now.....I wonder what you would draw.

- Would you draw a building like this, *(Show a picture of a church building)* or would you draw a group of people like this? *(Point at the group of people around the cross)*
- The church is the people of God isn't it.....not the building we meet in?

Now if you are observant, you will notice that there are gaps in our circles of people...

- That is because the church is not a closed group of people, like a club, but it is welcoming to all.

So if the church is the people of God, what is God's purpose for us - His church?

- To keep it really simple, we can use three short words to describe God's purpose for us, His church.
- Those words are UP, IN and OUT
- So the 1st word – UP.

Would you please all make sure you are facing Jesus.....now put up your hands.

- What do you think these people are doing? *(Receive answers from the congregation)*
- That's right they are worshipping God.....
- 1 Peter 2:9 says this: *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*
- The 1st purpose of the church is that we WORSHIP GOD....to declare His praises.....to life up His name.....to focus UP, which is what we are going to do now. *(Send your volunteers back to their seats)*

Song:

Songs worshipping God as per Appendix 1. Begin the time of worship with Psalm 100, with different sides of the congregation saying different verses as below:

(Service leader) Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

(One side of congregation) **Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.**

(Other side of congregation) **Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.**

(One side of congregation) **Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with
praise;
Give thanks to him and praise his name.**

(Other side of congregation)

**For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
His faithfulness continues through all generations.**

Follow immediately with a song.

Talk:

You will need a picture of “Rublev’s icon” (See Appendix 3) and a large tub of sweets eg. “Celebrations,” “Quality Street” or something similar and big enough for all the congregation to have one at the end of the service. Hide this tub of sweets somewhere at the front of church. Brief two reliable people before the service to come and help themselves to a sweet each from the tub after you have said the words: **The church’s third purpose is to go into the world and SHARE THE GOOD NEWS about Jesus with those who haven’t heard it yet.** As they walk back to their seats they are to eat their sweet and speak out words like, “*delicious,*” “*just what I needed,*” “*wonderful*” as loudly as they can.

This talk works well if the key points ie IN, OUT and UP are power-pointed.

We have seen that the Church is the people of God with three purposes, which we can shorten by saying: UP, IN and OUT.

- The UP purpose is to WORSHIP God.
- The IN purpose is GROWING A COMMUNITY on earth that looks rather like the community of God in heaven.

A painter called Rublev tried to show us something about what God is like by painting this icon of the Trinity. *(Show picture of Rublev’s icon)*

- We see God the Father on the left hand side; next to Him is God the Son, and next to Him is God the Holy Spirit.
- This picture helps us to see that God himself, the Holy Trinity, is a community of relationships.
- For example at Jesus’ baptism, the Holy Spirit was present in the form of the dove, and the Father spoke from heaven. (Matthew 3:16-17) They were in relationship with one another.

So what sort of relationship do you think exists within the Godhead?

- Well we only have to look at Jesus’ life and his relationship with His Father to see that the relationship in the community of the Godhead is one of love, unity, and self-giving.

The church is to be a community on earth that looks rather like the community of God in heaven.

- So it is a community where people love each other, accept one another, serve one another, encourage one another, live in harmony with one another and submit to one another.

Can you imagine how attractive this sort of community is to people outside the church?

- When the church looks like the community of the Holy Trinity, it will bring glory to God and it will grow as people are drawn to it.
- And notice, in Rublev’s icon, although the Trinity are in close relationship, there is this space at the front....room for others to join in and be welcome.

To recap then, the UP purpose of the church is WORSHIPPING God and the IN purpose of the church is GROWING A GOD-LIKE COMMUNITY on earth.

- And finally let's look at the OUT purpose of the church.
- Jesus told his disciples to *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”* (Mark 16:15)

The church's third purpose is to go into the world and SHARE THE GOOD NEWS about Jesus with those who haven't heard it yet. *(At this point two people get up and go to the front of the church where the tub of sweets is hidden. They help themselves to one sweet each which they eat as they walk back to their seats. As they walk they make loud comments like, “delicious,” “just what I needed,” “wonderful” etc)*

Those two people knew some good news that the rest of you didn't know!

- They knew, because I had told them before the service began, that there was a tub of sweets hidden in.....*(say where the sweets were hidden)*
- N and N chose to keep the good news of the sweets to themselves and not share it.

The church isn't to be like that.

- We have good news to share that is much better than the good news about a tub of sweets.
- We have the good news to share that God loves us and has sent Jesus to die for our sins so that we can become His children, both now and for all eternity.
- That news is to be spread to our families, our friends, our neighbours, the people of this town/city, nation and all over the world.
- To remind us of that, we are going to share the sweets around to everyone at the end of the service.

So today we have discovered that the church is the people of God with the three purposes of:

- WORSHIPPING GOD – “UP”
- GROWING A GOD-LIKE COMMUNITY – “IN” and
- SHARING THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS – “OUT”

Prayers:

Prayers could be led by the service leader or by a family etc, and focused on the purposes of the church.

- The first prayer could be praying for the **Worship life** of the church
- The second prayer could be praying for the **Growth of a God-like community**
- The third prayer could be praying for the **Sharing of the Good news about Jesus.**

Lord's Prayer:

End by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Summary:

The teaching points of the service were summarized at the end of the talk, but if you want to re-iterate them they are as follows:

The church is the people of God with the three purposes of:

- WORSHIPPING GOD – “UP”
- GROWING A GOD-LIKE COMMUNITY – “IN” and
- SHARING THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS – “OUT”

Response:

You will need a stone (which you can purchase from most Builder’s merchants or DIY centres) for each person present at the service. Give the stones to people as they arrive at the service.

Invite people to come forward during the final song and lay their stone at the foot of the cross as a way of saying that they “belong to the people of God;” that they are “a living stone” in God’s church. You might also like to briefly explain that Baptism is the sign of belonging in God’s church and that if anyone would like to consider being baptised to talk to you after the service has finished. If you have time, you could invite people to write² their names on the stones before laying them at the foot of the cross.

Final Song:

Final song as per Appendix 1. During this song people bring their stones and lay them at the foot of the cross.

Blessing:

Pray a simple prayer to end the service, something like the blessing prayer from Numbers 6:24-26 ie:

The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;

The LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. **Amen.**

[Notices: If your church gives out verbal notices my suggestion is that you do that just before the final song. That way the flow of worship is unbroken]

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² “Sharpie” pens will write on stones and you can purchase these from Amazon at www.amazon.co.uk

Appendix 1 - Ideas for Songs and Hymns:

i) Opening songs. Ideas include:

- Big family of God (Becky Drake © 2007 Song Solutions Daybreak)
- Come, now is the time to worship (Brian Doerksen © 1998 Vineyard Songs (UK/Eire))
- Come you thankful people come (Sam Hargraves © 2009 Resoundworship.org)
- Far and near hear the call (Graham Kendrick © 1995 Make Way Music)
- In the name of the Father (Our God saves) (Brenton Brown, Paul Baloche © 2007 Integrity's Hosanna! Music)
- The church's one foundation (Samuel John Stone, Samuel Sebastian Wesley)

ii) Songs worshipping God. Ideas include:

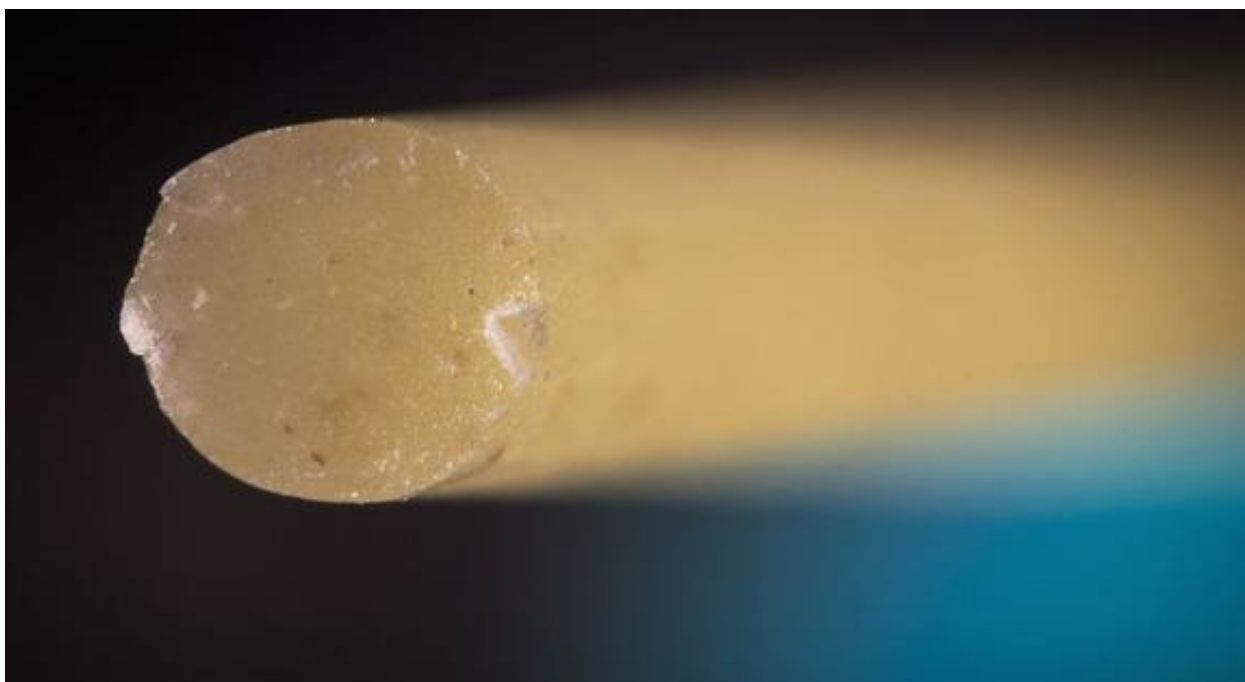
- Holy, holy, holy (Lift up His name) (Nathan Fellingham © 1995 Thankyou Music)
- In my life Lord be glorified (Bob Kilpatrick © 1978 Bob Kilpatrick Ministries)
- Jesus is the name we honour (Philip Lawson Johnston © 1991 Thankyou Music)
- Lord we lift your name on high (Rick Founds © 1989 Universal Music - Brentwood Benson Publishing)
- O Lord our God how majestic is your name (Philip Lawson Johnston © 1982 Thankyou Music)
- Praise Him you heavens (Russell Fragar © 1998 Hillsong Music Publishing)
- The splendour of the King (Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, Jesse Reeves © 2004 sixsteps Music)
- Through all the changing scenes of life (Nahum Tate, Nicholas Brady)
- We are the people of God (Chris Jackson © 2006 Powerpack)

iii) Final song. Ideas include:

- Come set your rule and reign (Rend Collective © 2011 Thankyou Music)
- Everyone needs compassion (Ben Fielding, Reuben Morgan © 2006 Hillsong Music Publishing)
- For I'm building a people of power (Dave Richards © 1977 Thankyou Music)
- O breath of life come sweeping through us (Elizabeth Ann Porter Head)
- O church arise (Keith Getty, Stuart Townend © 2005 Thankyou Music)
- We are heirs of God Almighty (Stuart Townend © 2002 Thankyou Music)
- We are his people (Graham Kendrick © 1990 Make Way Music)
- We have a gospel to proclaim (Edward J. Burns © Edward J. Burns)

Appendix 2 – Quiz - “What is this?”

1) What is this?



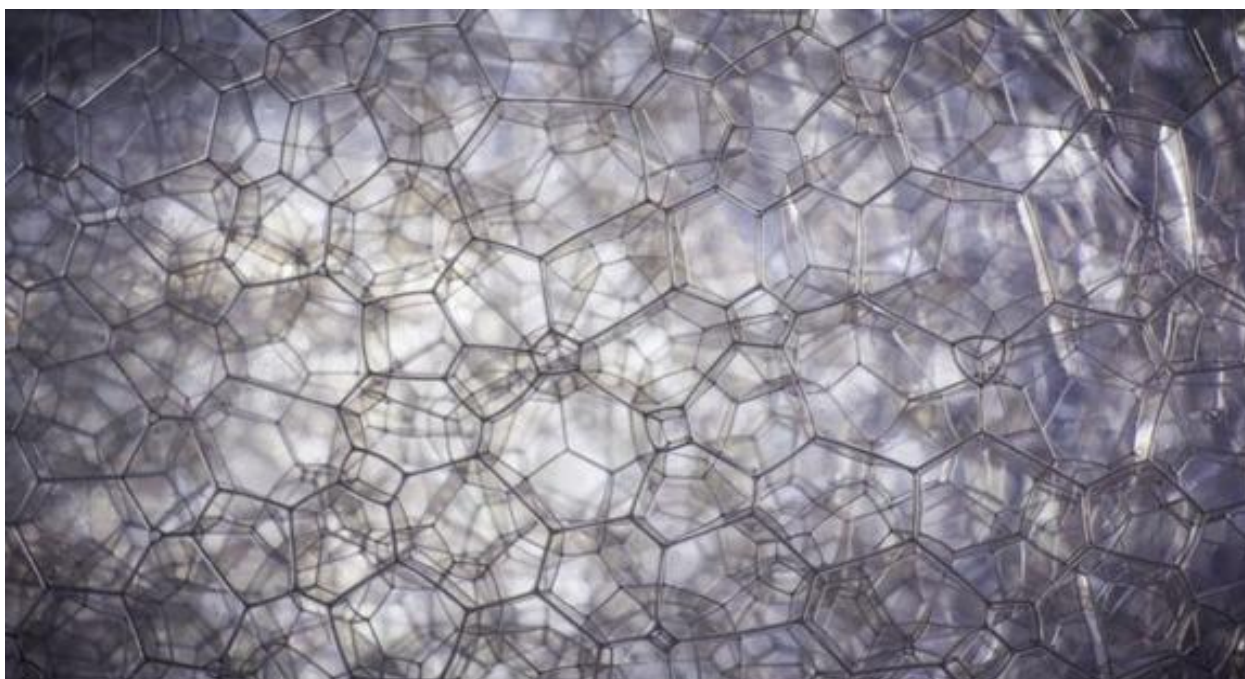
2) What is this?



3) What is this?



4) What is this?



Appendix 3 – Rublev's Icon

