

Isaiah

MEETING AIM

To explore something of the holiness of God and our reaction to that.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Isaiah 6:1-8

KEY VERSE

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole Earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3).

10 PRAYER AND WORSHIP

OPTION 1

You will need: large chair; gold or silver material; choral or chant music; lights; smoke machine (optional)

Before the service, set up a throne installation at the front of your meeting space. Cover a large chair with gold or silver material, set up appropriate lights, and play dramatic choral music or monastic chanting. If you have access to one, use a smoke machine to create extra atmosphere. Try to recreate as best you can what Isaiah might have seen.

As people arrive for the service, direct them to look at the throne installation and wonder about what it represents. Once they have had a chance to look at the throne, gather people in small groups to chat about its meaning. What does it make them think of? How does it make them feel?

OPTION 2

You will need: coal shapes cut from grey paper; gold and silver pens; fire basket or chiminea

As the congregation arrives, give everyone a coal shape and a pen. Invite them to find a quiet place in your meeting space to think about what they might want to ask God's forgiveness for. Encourage everyone to think through their week and reflect on what they have done that they shouldn't have, or what they didn't do that they should have. Ask them to write this down on their coal shape. Parents and carers should help their children think about what they might write or draw on their coal.

When the congregation is ready, invite them to come and place their coal in the fire basket or chiminea. As they do so, they should ask God to forgive them for the thing they have written down. When all the coals have been deposited, affirm God's forgiveness using a prayer from your liturgy, if appropriate.

10 STORY

You will need: the throne installation from 'Prayer and worship option 1' (or the materials to make it)

If you did 'Prayer and worship option 1', keep the throne installation at the front of your space for the storytelling. If you didn't, create the throne now. You could involve the congregation in constructing it. Show the materials you have brought and ask some volunteers to help you build the throne. Once it is finished, thank your volunteers and tell this story.

Over 2,500 years ago, there was a man called Isaiah. He was the son of Amoz and probably lived in Jerusalem. Isaiah was a friend of God. One day he had a vision. It was no ordinary daydream. He hadn't just nodded off after a cheesy snack. This was a vision of God!

Look at the throne. It looks pretty special, doesn't it? Well, Isaiah's vision was like this, but a thousand times more impressive! Close your eyes and try to imagine what Isaiah saw. He saw God sitting on a throne, high and lifted up. He saw heavenly creatures all around him. They had six wings – two covering their faces, two covering their feet and two for flying! They called to each other:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

The foundations of the building shook in response to their voices and the whole place filled with smoke. Can you imagine that? If you were Isaiah, what would you think?

Well, Isaiah was afraid! He shouted: “Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!”

Then one of the winged creatures flew down to Isaiah with a hot coal in its hand. The creature touched it to Isaiah's lips and said: “Your guilt has been taken away and your sins forgiven!”

How do you think Isaiah felt after that? Do you think his lips were burnt? Well, it wasn't over yet. For then Isaiah heard God himself speak:

“Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?”

Isaiah heard a voice – his own – say: “Here I am. Send me!”

10 REFLECTIVE RESPONSE

OPTION 1

You will need: art materials; paper; reflective music and the means to play it

Before the service, create a few art stations around your meeting space. Encourage the congregation to visit one of the stations and create an artistic response to what they have heard today. Ask everyone to think about questions such as: “What is God doing in the story?” “What is God saying to me?” “How would I respond to the question ‘Whom shall I send?’?”

Give the congregation as much time as possible to complete this exercise. When most people have finished, draw everyone back together and invite people to share what they have created if they wish to do so. Finish by thanking God for everything he has said to you.

OPTION 2

You will need: the song 'I the Lord of sea and sky'

Explain that Isaiah's encounter with God took him from “Woe is me!” to “Here I am. Send me!” Give the congregation a moment of quiet to reflect on what God might have done in Isaiah's mind and soul to make that change possible. Isaiah is convicted of his sinfulness by the vision of God's holiness. Then God forgives Isaiah for his wrongs and makes him holy. Remind everyone of the confession activity in 'Prayer and worship option 2' if you did it. If not, you may wish to do that now.

Sing 'I the Lord of sea and sky' together and ask everyone to think about saying yes to God. Where might God be asking you to go today?

10 GROUP DISCUSSION

Divide into mixed-age groups and discuss these questions:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- What didn't you like about this story?
- What will you change because of what you've discovered?
- Where is God sending you?

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