

FAITH & WORSHIP

LOCAL PREACHERS TRAINING COURSE

How to submit a Section of Faith & Worship for Connexional assessment

revised September 2010

When you have completed a Section of *Faith & Worship*, the following need to be forwarded to the **Connexional Local Preachers Secretary** –
Rev Mervyn G Ewing, 10 Waterloo Gardens, Belfast BT15 4EX:

- a completed **Assessment Cover Sheet** for this section of *Faith & Worship*
 - a **copy of each assignment** for this section of *Faith & Worship*,
 - marked by your Local Tutor
 - to have achieved a mark of 40% at least
 - to include any earlier drafts marked by the tutor
 - to have a Student Record Sheet (completed on both sides)(Please keep a copy of each of your assignments for your own records.)
 - the **two exegesis passages** for this section of *Faith & Worship*
(See Guidance on writing answers for exegesis passages below)
 - your **Worship Portfolio** for this section of *Faith & Worship* which consists of:
 - your personal reflection on one act of worship where you were present but had no formal responsibilities
 - paperwork for one act of worship you have taken during your study of this Section, ie:
 - a copy of the order of service
 - a Service Report Form for that service completed by you
 - a Service Report Form - Summary Sheet for that service agreed by you and your assessors (*This refers to the reports the student receives from those observing their trial sermon which is mentioned in the **Requirements for Assessment** section*).
 - a brief account of how you have sought, or will seek, to address the points for further work identified on the Summary Sheet
 - a transcript of a sermon (or a detailed account of its alternative) delivered by you during your study of this Section. This may be from the service reported on above. If it comes from another service, please include an order of service for that act of worship. Bullet-pointed summaries will not be accepted for this part of the Worship Portfolio.
- Please note that in total the student is required to submit only two service reports for which he/she was responsible for.**

(See Guidance on completing a Worship Portfolio below)

You can send in your work for a Section of *Faith & Worship* at any time during the year. There are two deadline dates for Connexional assessment: 31 March and 30 September each year. Work received after these dates will be kept ready for the next deadline date. Feedback sheets (with the overall result) will be sent to your Local Tutor before 31 May or 30 November.

Students are advised to keep a copy of all material submitted for their own records, as no work will be returned. We ask that you do not use a ring binder or multiple plastic wallets.

Worship Portfolio

Your personal reflection on one act of worship where you were present but had no formal responsibilities.

Please give us a few facts that will help put your personal reflection in context eg: place, date and time, numbers, age range. Then write your reflection (300-500 words) remembering that the emphasis needs to be on your understanding and evaluation of what happened rather than just describing what happened. To do this well, try answering questions that start How? or Why? to show UNDERSTANDING and questions that start How well? or How appropriate? and even How do I compare? to show EVALUATION. If you're not sure what to comment on, a Service Report Form could give you some ideas. Here's an example of personal reflection on one act of worship. Can you spot evidence of understanding? Can you find evaluative comments? (Please note: there is no official form to record your reflection.)

*Ballygosomewhere Methodist Church
14 February, 10am
Congregation of 50 people—half adults, half children
Adults ages: 30-75, Children ages: babies -15
Multi-cultural, multi-ethnic*

In addition to someone welcoming people at the door as they came in, the preacher also personally greeted people, moving round the church to do so. The preacher was very warm and caring in his manner, demonstrating God's love and concern for each individual.

There was a lot of participation in the service—several members of the congregation shared in the worship by bringing the scripture readings, leading the contemporary singing, taking up the offering, and bringing an interactive all-age message. This reminds us that worship is a joint celebration of who God is and what he's done, that worship is active, and thus helps the whole congregation to be actively involved in the worship.

Being Valentine's Day, the theme of the service was Love. Instead of a children's message a member of the congregation brought an all-age message based on the word Love. The congregation were divided into four groups and each group had to think of words that describe God's love beginning with L, with O, with V and with E, i.e. beginning with each of the letters in the word love. Each group then shared their ideas which were written up on a flipchart. This was a really good way to get the congregation actively involved including the children—even the young ones were able to call out words that their parents told them—and to get everyone working together. It made us stop and think about what God's love is really like. This practical way of reflecting is a good way to help us internalise truths about God.

The sermon was based on a well-known passage of scripture 1 Corinthians 13. Whilst it probably contained important truths, it was not memorable. I think that a sermon should help to deepen our understanding of God, in order

to deepen our faith and draw us into a closer relationship with God; I feel challenged to think about how to do this whilst preaching a sermon based on very familiar passages. How do I bring something fresh? Something the congregation can apply in their everyday lives.

Your personal reflection will be marked out of 20:

- 10 marks for understanding
- 10 marks for evaluation

Paperwork for one act of worship you have taken during your study of this section

This must include:

- A copy of the **order of service**

You will have prepared this anyway, so it's just a case of remembering to keep it in your Worship Portfolio.

- A **Service Report Form** for that service completed by you

You and each of your assessors should have a Service Report Form to complete after the service you have taken (as a normal part of reporting for the Circuit Local Preachers' Meeting). This helps each of you bring your own thoughts and perspectives when you meet to agree the Summary Sheet. Only the Service Report Form that you have completed needs to be kept in your Worship Portfolio.

- A Service Report Form - **Summary Sheet** for that service agreed by you and your assessors (normally a preacher and a church steward)

The Summary Sheet draws together the thoughts and reflections of the preacher and the assessors. This process is particularly helpful when all involved share their perceptions, consider their responses and come to an agreed evaluation. Some points on this sheet may be similar to the points you've made on your own Service Report Form, but others may be rather different. For example, there might be mention of something you've overlooked or taken for granted. There might be pointers for further development that were easier to spot in the pew than in the pulpit. There might be encouragement and praise that you would not have given yourself. A copy of this Summary Sheet will go to the Local Preachers' Meeting, but you'll also need a copy for your Worship Portfolio.

- A brief account of how you have sought, or will seek, to address the **points for further work** identified on the Summary Sheet

You could write this on the back of the Summary Sheet. It's worth discussing this with your assessors as you all complete the Summary Sheet anyway. For example, it's all very well identifying a need for voice projection but the assessors and/or the Local Preachers' Meeting should also suggest who could help you. Your 'brief account' on addressing the 'points for further work' will clarify who will do what by when (or who has done what already!)

Your Service Report Form will receive comments with reference to the order of service, the Summary Sheet and your brief account on addressing the 'points for further work'. It will be treated rather like your Personal Reflection on another's service, but this time the Service Report Form's questions give you a detailed agenda to work to.

Assessors will look for understanding (of what the Service Report Form is asking you to make comment) and evaluation (your assessment of how well different aspects of the service went). They will offer comment, but not award marks.

- A **transcript of a sermon** (or a detailed account of its alternative) delivered by you during your study of this Section. This may be from the service reported on above. If it comes from another service, please include an order of service for that act of worship. Bullet-pointed summaries will not be accepted for this part of the Worship Portfolio. If you have preached a sermon from a full script, then it's the full script that goes into your Worship Portfolio. If you have preached from notes, then the notes themselves are not enough. A tape-recording of the sermon given to an audio-typist would be the quickest way to get a transcript. If you have conveyed the Good News in alternative ways (rather than a sermon), then a detailed account of what was said and done needs to go into your Worship Portfolio. Whichever approach you take, this part of the Worship Portfolio offers evidence of how you share the Good News with a congregation.

Assessors will look for and comment on some or all of the following:

- clarity of aim
- creativity
- how the content relates to Biblical material
- how the content relates to today

Exegesis

Each year in the August letter to Local Tutors will appear a list of two Bible passages for each Section of *Faith & Worship* for the following calendar year's Connexional Assessment (31 March and 30 September). The list will also appear in the Methodist Newsletter in early autumn. Please note that exegesis passages are section and year specific: if you miss the deadline for any September assessment, you will need to re-write your exegesis passages to match those set for the following year.

On page 28 of Unit 2 of *Faith & Worship*, there is a diagram for sermon preparation. The notes on the next few pages explain how the diagram relates to exegesis in assignments and in Connexional Assessment. The following format is used:

For a given passage:

- outline its context and background*
- indicate its original meaning*
- consider its message for us today in the light of its context, background and original meaning*

In the Connexional assessment, each Bible passage will be marked out of 30:

- a. 8 marks (knowledge)
- b. 10 marks (understanding)
- c. 12 marks (application)

You have to reach the pass mark of 40% (12 marks out of 30) for each Bible passage. This guidance aims to help you do much better than that!

A suggested word count is 600-1000 words for each exegesis.

a. Outline its context and background

This part refers to the first and third set of questions in the 'Exegesis' segment of the diagram on page 28 of Unit 2:

- **Context:** Why is this Bible passage where it is?
What comes before it and after?
- **Background:** What is the cultural background of this passage?
What type of literature is it?
What do we know of its author and the audience for whom it was intended?

Here, your answers are assessed for KNOWLEDGE.

You may choose to deal with **background** first eg:

- Author: who was speaking/writing when, about what
- Type of literature: eg: law, history, poetry, prophecy, gospel, letter, eschatology, parable, saying, miracle story, argument
- Audience: who the audience was

There is no need for great detail. Usually, a few sentences will be enough to provide the relevant information.

Once this is done, you can deal with **context**:

- Before and after: what ground the previous and subsequent verses cover
how this passage affirms/contrasts with the verses around it
- Sources: in some cases there may be a need to mention where a passage comes from, or how there is a similar passage to this elsewhere, or how an editor's hand is evident

Again, this can be done concisely. It is helpful if descriptions of context throw light on the passage in question rather than restate in detail what comes before and after. It is also worthwhile simply noting information about sources that help show the particular emphasis or tone of the passage. Avoid delving into fascinating facts and comparisons.

b. Indicate its original meaning

This part of the question refers to the second set of questions in the 'Exegesis' part of the diagram on page 28 of Unit 2:

- **Meaning** What might it have meant to the original hearers/readers?
 What reactions did it provoke then and why?

Here, answers are assessed for UNDERSTANDING. Answers are likely to cover at least some of the following points:

- what the author may have meant or what the audience may have understood
- (especially referring to how key words/themes appear in the passage)
- what theological ideas appear in the passage

It may not be possible to keep these elements separate. In fact, it may be better if they are closely linked. For example, to say 'kingdom of God' is a key idea without explaining meaning(s) of the phrase makes it hard for a local tutor or a Connexional Assessor to give credit for understanding. Many passages offer more than one theological idea, so an answer which limits itself to one point and misses others is weak, even if the one point is explained well.

Answers are strong when they show that not only has the Bible passage been read and considered, but also that views and understandings of others (for example, in the unit and in commentaries) have been taken into account as well.

c. Consider its message for us today in the light of its context, background and original meaning.

This part of the question needs to draw on the 'Preacher' and 'People' segments of the diagram on page 28 of Unit 2.

- **Individual ('Preacher')** What echoes are there in this Bible passage for me?
 Are there links with my own story?

 Does this passage raise questions for me?
 Does the passage challenge, confront or confirm me?
- **Community ('People')** What echoes are there in this Bible passage for a congregation or community?
 Are there links with these people's own story or experience?

What words or ideas may stand out for those who hear it?
What questions might be raised by this passage?
Does the passage offer a critique or confirmation to the contemporary world?

Here, answers are assessed for APPLICATION (how well the message is applied to the contemporary [and perhaps local] situation yet with due care to honour the sense of direction and purpose learned from considering the passage's context, background and original meaning).

Although the questions addressed to the 'Preacher' may throw fresh light or searching questions for the preacher on the passage, these should only be used to alert the preacher to how the message can be applied to the contemporary circumstances the congregation is facing. They might spark an idea for an illustration from personal experience, but the focus should be primarily on the 'People' questions.

Answers are strong when they show that the passage can become a lens through which contemporary situations are seen in sharp relief.

Applying the diagram to an assignment or examination question

An assignment or examination question might offer only one or two verses for exegesis and interpretation, so the following answer is based on Matthew 13: 31 - 35 (NIV):

Exegesis:

a. Outline its context and background.

Matthew would have been writing for a Jewish audience and therefore the word 'God' would have been avoided and so he writes about the 'kingdom of heaven.' Matthew emphasises that Jesus was the fulfilment of the OT prophecies, presenting Him as their true King.

Chapter 13 is a collection of seven parables of the kingdom. Tension has been rising in the previous two chapters, where the narrative has explored the nature of Jesus' messiahship and there has been confrontation with the Pharisees in response to a controversial healing on the Sabbath. Jesus does not seek publicity, indeed he discourages anyone that he healed not to "tell who he was" and in 12:18 - 21 he quotes from Isaiah 42: 1 - 4 which outlines his ministry to the outcast and ultimately to the Gentiles. 13:53 - 17:27 records the build up of conflict with Jewish leaders which lead up to the rejection and death of Jesus.

Matthew 13:2 reveals that Jesus was surrounded by such large crowds that he had to get "into a boat and sat in it while all the people stood on the shore". He taught them in parables. The disciples didn't understand these parables and Jesus interprets them for them, saying in v11 "The knowledge of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them." He quotes from Isaiah 6:9, 10 that "You will be ever hearing but never understanding, you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused;..." The crowd would have been Jewish, among them Pharisees, who were living under the rule of the pagan Roman Empire. By teaching in parables Jesus can effectively challenge those whose imagination was

bound by the expectations they had of the Messiah and what he would do. The parables were provocative, breaking through the present reality to reveal a new vision of the Kingdom of God.

b. Indicate its original meaning.

The mustard seed and the yeast - parables of growth

These two short parables contrast the small beginning of the kingdom with the greatness of its effects. God's kingdom has secret power which confounds the wisdom of the world. The parables remind us of the humility in which God's kingdom is established.

Why did Jesus choose a mustard seed? The mustard seed is tiny, but is not, in fact, the smallest of all seeds. The shrub that grows from the tiny seed is great by comparison with its beginnings, the mustard shrub typically grows to between 8 and 12 feet, but this is hardly comparable to the mighty cedars of Lebanon, with which Israel preferred to liken itself.

Daniel 4: 10 – 12 speaks of a vision of an enormous tree standing in the middle of the land, with beautiful leaves, fruit for all and under it shelter for the beasts of the field and the birds living in its branches.

Ezekiel 17:23 is similar, only the tree is named as a might cedar.

An observant Jew would have been struck by the unorthodox nature of the very act of sowing a mustard seed in a field. It would have been viewed as an offense against God's covenant with Israel. Lev 19:19 forbids planting your field with two kinds of seed.

Mustard is an invasive plant – so there's an uncontrollable aspect of the Kingdom of God. It's less to do with our initiative but more to do with our cooperation with God's Spirit.

To an Eastern mind, the image of a seed growing would be a mysterious miracle. In 1 Cor 15:35 – 38, the seed is an image of the resurrection, showing the mystery of new life following death.

The mustard seed is also used as a metaphor for personal faith in Matt 17:20.

Mustard has a pungent taste and was also used for medicinal and seasoning purposes so maybe there's the idea of the Kingdom of God being a source of healing.

The mention of the birds perching in the branches could also allude to the tree image from Daniel & Ezekiel and so subverting the whole idea of self-aggrandizement. The birds would have likely been unwanted pests in a planted field where they would eat seeds. Birds were considered unclean so could these unwelcome visitors include the gentiles?

So the original meaning of the mustard shrub is that that God brings great things out of small beginnings, but that we should not expect his kingdom to be great as the world counts greatness. There'll be an element of surprise, of crossing boundaries and challenge to our love of control & power.

Leaven is old, fermented dough which is used as a raising agent. It would have been considered as a symbol for moral corruption.

1 Cor 5:6, 7

⁶Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?

⁷Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

Also, Gal 5:9 ⁹"A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."

In Matthew 16: 6 ⁶"Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." What he is warning about is the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees which was essentially petty, used to control and also sectarian.

Unleavened bread was used in the Passover and in the Temple and symbolised what was holy and sacred.

The quantity of the flour is excessive. The bread would provide a meal for over 100 people so is Jesus suggesting a feast? Jesus was criticised by the Pharisees for mixing with sinners and not fasting.

Women would have been considered unclean, religiously impure – someone on the margins.

In the Greek, the verb is not kneading (phyrao) but hides (krypto in Luke & egkrypto in Matt) so there's a sinister feel to what's going on.

So there is a challenge here to recognise that the kingdom of God will not take place where people are concerned about remaining holy and uncorrupted by the world. Reaching out in love, compassion, reconciliation and forgiveness is more important in God's eyes than moral incorruption. The Kingdom of God is active in the ordinary and almost in unnoticeable ways but the effects will be huge, sometimes taking us by surprise.

The parable of the leaven also encourages us to avoid seclusion and to be involved in the world. Leaven works as it is worked into the dough.

c. Consider its message for the congregation you have described.

As an encouragement – that God brings great things out of small beginnings. It's beyond our control. It spreads not through mighty campaigns and crusades but in hidden and seditious ways. Not to expect the kingdom to be great as the world counts greatness. We can expect God to use small and trivial beginnings to transform the world in unexpected, disruptive and non-violent ways.

*To realise the **boundary breaker that Jesus was**. To consider what boundaries we erect or preserve. To be open to those who are different from us – especially those whom we would consider undesirable or unholy. The kingdom belongs to those who are on the edge, the poor, disenfranchised, invisible people. It overturns the self-serving interests of the ruling elites. It's not about us staying in a 'holy huddle' away from those who don't live good moral lives like us. This is a challenge to us in church when we're all nice and middle class.*

*Not just to **think about what Jesus says but to act upon it**. The parables give us a sense of direction. We cannot build the kingdom but we can pray for it, practice the kingdom in our daily lives. We can take this parable home and let it be the starting point and ask God to show us what it means for us.*