

All-age resources

Material for all ages together to supplement the ecumenical worship service

Listening to the Living Word of God

These limerick-type versions of the Acts story offer an alternative or supplement to the readings.

First Reading Acts 27:16-26

There once was a ship that was tempest tossed.
Its crew then believed all hope was lost.
'Jettison the cargo!
Ship's tackle also!'
Terrified this storm their lives would cost.

But unafraid was the prisoner Paul,
Going to Caesar because of God's call,
'I told you to wait,
As the season was late;
But my God sent a vision granting safety to all.

'An angel he sent to me in the night
The ship will be lost, but you'll be all right.
Take courage. End fear,
For my God is here!
I will go to Rome his cause to fight.'

Psalm 107 Response and action

You could add this extension to the response line and teach the actions.

Response line: The Lord has delivered us from the mighty waves. Give thanks to the Lord for his mercy.

Give thanks *Right hand open touches mouth and moves away.*

to the Lord *Point up with index fingers of both hands.*

for his mercy. *Both hands up, palms facing out, index fingers tucked in beat out the rhythm of the word mer-cy.*

Second Reading Acts 27:27-32

On night fourteen as they were nearing land
The selfish crew their escape had planned;
For they launched a boat,
But Paul took note
Crying. 'The sailors must stay, the ship must be manned.'

Third Reading Acts 27:33-38

Before the dawn came, Paul said, 'Eat to survive
For God has promised that you will thrive.'
He broke the bread,
Thanksgiving he said.
Then ate with all two hundred and seventy-five.

Fourth Reading Acts 27:39-44

As the morning broke they glimpsed a beach
For the ship to head for, and safety reach
But a reef they found
and ran aground
So breakers caused the wreck to breach.

The soldiers were planning the prisoners to slay,
'If they escape, we die, so standing orders say.'
'No one will run!' came the call
From their captain, bent on saving Paul
So swimming or floating all came ashore that day.

Fifth Reading Acts 28:1-11

Maltese locals treated them with care.
Giving food, shelter and generous welfare.
Yet from the fire they lit
A snake jumped out and bit
Paul's hand. 'God's judgement!' they declare.

They thought he'd swell up and from its venom fall.
Yet Paul did not die, he suffered not at all.
Was he divine?
No! It was a sign
That Paul, missionary and healer, was following God's call.

Biblical reflection or short homily

Instead of an address one of the following suggestions could be used.

Unusual kindness

- Show or project a picture of a shipwreck.
- Split into small groups with a mix of ages in each group.
- Allow two minutes for each group to suggest an example of unusual kindness that they have experienced or witnessed. Ask what was unusual or unexpected about it. Invite responses. If none are forthcoming, have an example yourself ready to hand. Relate it to today's reading.
- Ask, Why do you suppose Luke remarks on the Islanders' response?
Note: Shipwreck survivors were often regarded as fair game, especially if they were strangers. They would also cost a lot to feed and look after. Some they might not want to help e.g. the soldiers or the prisoners. The islanders may have been very poor and there were a lot of victims to look after, most of whom could not pay.
- Today, who for us might be regarded as people in need of help? Draw up a list of ideas. How might we react? What would be a generous response?
- Give the groups a scenario to discuss. Use one of these or invent your own:
 - Imagine a group of refugees have been recently settled in your community, how could you help make them feel at home?
 - A local church from a different tradition has lost their church building in a fire and needs a temporary home.
 - A charity for the homeless is looking for premises for a night shelter and befrienders.
 - A mental health group wants to use a church hall as a drop in centre or club.

Remember when help is asked for it is often unexpected, and can be inconvenient. However, such situations often test the reality of our Christian faith and provide opportunities for different Christian groups to work together.

Baggage

- On the floor, draw or mark with rope a large boat shape. Inside pile up a collection of five or six bags and suitcases of different shapes and sizes. Brief some people beforehand, to be the 'survivors', telling them what they've got to do. At the start of the activity, they sit inside the boat shape with the baggage.
- Blow a whistle and cry out 'Lighten ship. Throw out the luggage.' *The survivors throw out the luggage on one side of the boat.*
- Blow the whistle again and call out, "The ship is sinking. Abandon ship!" *The survivors mime swimming or floating to the land, dodging the baggage.*
- Gather everyone together.
- Ask why the luggage was thrown out. Ask survivors if they'd have thrown out the baggage if it contained their most favourite possessions? Why/why not? What is most important? Did the baggage get in the way as you tried to reach safety?
- We can use the word baggage to describe things that we cling onto, but which actually get in the way of helping us go forward. If we move to a new neighbourhood, a new school, a new job, a different country, what baggage might we have to abandon? Encourage contributions. How do you decide what things are vital and what things could or should be laid aside?
- The runner, Eric Liddell, was knocked to the ground in one of his races, but instead of giving up and crying unfair, he leapt to his feet made up the lost ground and won the race. A scene in the 1981 film, *Chariots of Fire*, shows this event. Liddell is following Paul's words to the Christians at Philippi. Forgetting what lies behind (i.e. the baggage) and straining forward to what lies ahead (the prize), Philippians 3:13-14. For the Christian the most important thing is to follow Jesus.

These resources have been written by the Revd Don Dowling, on behalf of ROOTS for Churches Ltd.

ROOTS publishes weekly worship and learning resources at www.rootsontheweb.com