

## Offering Rather than Collecting? A Case Study.

When thinking about what the offertory represents we decided to look for ways in which the liturgy could convey a sense of offering your life rather than collecting your money. Through discussion we realised that there are several things we do simultaneously at the peace: Greet one another and form community; preparing the altar; sing; hunt desperately in our pockets for something to put in the bag when it is sent along our row.

What if we were to offer our whole lives? What if we were able to bring ourselves and put ourselves to God's use? What if we took more than just money at the offertory? What if each one of us brought ourselves forward with our gifts and placed them in front of the altar? What if we did this more than once a year when we put fruit and veg and tins of beans next to the altar at harvest?

So we did. Our building is a small 1950's building on a social housing estate and the altar is often on the same level as the congregation. At 'the peace' we brought our gifts and placed them into a basket given to us by the parish we are linked with in Africa. Instructions were given at the beginning of the service the first week that we did this. By the second and third time it had become second nature. We provided small glass beads for people to use who pay by direct giving or other means. This is the liturgy we used:

### PEACE AS THE PLACE OF OFFERING.

#### *Stand*

As we gather as community, we respond to what God has given us.  
We make our lives an offering, our time, our money and our love.

#### *Informal instructions are given:*

*During the peace we will greet each other as a sign of our community. We will offer our gifts into the basket.*

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in heaven and on earth is yours.

**All things come from you,  
and of your own do we give you.**

#### *Seasonal words of introduction to the peace*

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
**And also with you.**

*We exchange a sign of God's peace during which people may bring up their offering and place it into the basket.*

#### **Hymn**

*A member of the congregation/child/bishop may pray:*

Receive and bless these gifts and our lives  
O Lord,  
which we offer in response to your love.  
As your Son Jesus transformed people's lives,  
may the lives of others be transformed through  
these gifts,  
our love and our witness.  
Through Christ our Lord,  
Amen

A child prayed the prayer of offering whilst two other members of the congregation held up the basket of financial gifts and another held up the bread and wine before they were poured out and placed upon the altar. We then carried on with the sursum corda and proceeded as normal.

Having reflected corporately we discovered that this worked really well for the congregation. It was felt that the offering was more of a spiritual activity rather than just financial. A by-product was that the service also felt more inclusive of all ages as there were things that children could offer that didn't involve being given small coins. We also discovered that this works really well during non-Eucharistic worship as the offering is no longer just tagged on at the end as an afterthought. On reflection, we probably wouldn't do this every week but perhaps once a month at our all age services. We are also going to put together a laminated card with different offering prayers on it so that whoever is praying can choose whichever they want.

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