

EDUCATION SUNDAY 2007

www.educationsunday.org

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Education Sunday

The ninth Sunday before Easter is traditionally set aside by all the Christian churches in England and Wales as Education Sunday.

For well over a hundred years there has been an annual recognition of Education Sunday in England and Wales. It is a national day of prayer and celebration for everyone in the world of education. The theme is devised by an ecumenical steering group representing different Christian denominations and organisations.

The ideas in this publication are intended to be used as a springboard for a variety of events on or around Education Sunday. If you feel unable to devote a whole service to celebrating the education theme on the nationally recognised Education Sunday why not use some of the ideas on other occasions? (Some churches, for instance, prefer to hold a special service of rededication for staff and students at local schools, colleges and universities at the start of the academic year. Other churches prefer to hold a service of celebration and thanksgiving at the end of the academic year.)

Next year Education Sunday will be on 20 January 2008.

ULTIMATE MAKEOVER?

The world says: *perfect smiles and beautiful bodies are more important than loving hearts and caring minds; success is skin deep.* The Bible says: *success is about being more Christ-like and more Christ-centred; it is about loving God, loving other people and loving God's world.* The world says: *everyone can be outwardly transformed . . . for a price . . . all it takes is a nip and tuck, a professional makeover or a trendy new wardrobe.* The Bible says: *everyone can be inwardly transformed . . . and the price has already been paid by God . . . all it takes is faith.*

Paul in his letter to the Corinthians invites us to join a learning conversation that echoes through the centuries, and is still pursued in classrooms and lecture theatres by teachers and students alike. From long before the time of Isaiah to now we have searched for fulfilment and to become more fully human, to be truly happy and fulfilled. But where can we find this happiness? Our culture informs us that if we want to be loved, valued and accepted, first we need to look good and become a fashion icon. Yet all these changes are passing and do not last. They leave us searching for meaning beyond the immediate.

This search for meaning and understanding is one that generations have engaged in. For fulfilment is not found just in the externals but through becoming an icon of Christ. Through God's grace we are invited to respond to the Lord's invitation to follow and become more like Him. For Isaiah, holiness is not found in grand gestures but in small acts of loving God, loving other people and helping to sustain the beauty of creation. What Paul in the midst of his failure came to understand is God's unconditional love and he leaves us this example of faith and humility, reminding the people of Corinth to become what God desires of them. Through this endeavour of hope we too will be transformed both inwardly and outwardly to become, in our time, part of God's holy people.

EDUCATION SUNDAY 2007: ULTIMATE MAKEOVER?

SUGGESTED HYMNS

- *Amazing grace*
- *Christ is alive*
- *I am a new creation*
- *I know that my redeemer lives*
- *I, the Lord of sea and sky*
- *Jesus you are changing me*
- *Love divine, all loves excelling*
- *Open our eyes to see (CJM Music)*
- *Spirit of the living God*
- *The day of resurrection*
- *Thine be the glory*

LECTIONARY READINGS

- Isaiah 6:1-8 (9-13)
- Psalm 138
- Luke 5: 1-11
- 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11

A PRAYER OF THANKS FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

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Lord our God

We thank You that You made each one of us in Your image and likeness, and that we are all Your beloved children.

We pray for the children/students we teach.

We pray for children/students who ... make us smile; ... challenge our way of thinking;
... test our patience; ... we find easy to like;
... we find difficult to like; ... are bright;
... are hardworking; ... find learning tough;
... get on our nerves; ... are a delight;
... like to laugh; ... always look sad;
... always look lost; ... talk all the time;
... never say a word; ... are easily overlooked;
... are impossible to ignore;
... remind us of ourselves when we were younger!

We thank You for all the children/students who have an impact on our lives and for the privilege of having an impact on their lives.

Lord, help us not to label those we teach or to fall into the trap of thinking we have got them sussed. Help us to be open to new revelations and the work of Your Holy Spirit in each of their lives.

Lord, use those we teach to teach us. Help us to be Christ-like at all times; seeing each one with Your eyes and valuing them with Your heart of love.

We ask this prayer in the name of Jesus the teacher.

Amen

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AN IDEA FOR AN ALL AGE TALK

Changing Rooms!

Who knows what a changing room is? In a big department store it might be a cubicle where you go to try on new clothes before deciding whether or not to buy them.

However:

School changing rooms can be important meeting places too. For example someone taking part in sport might be familiar with a changing room where:

- you make sure you're wearing the correct sports-gear;
- you think about how you're going to compete;
- you might meet those who will be competing with you.

Changing rooms are literally places where 'change happens'. They can be:

- exciting places - often highly charged with excitement and emotion, and everyone talking at once;
- quiet places - where you try to focus on the job in hand;
- places of transformation - when a coach's pep-talk helps people to believe in themselves;
- places of growth - when the sharing of experiences can instil confidence and improve performance.

Classrooms and lecture theatres (and church buildings too!) are all 'changing rooms' – not places to be fearful of, but places of transformation, growth and grace, where, with God's help, our learning and understanding can lead us to achievement and success whatever our age. The most important 'changing room' for the first followers of Jesus was the empty tomb! (Luke 24: 5,6)

There were remarkable changes to those frightened people after they had looked inside and discovered for themselves the amazing fact that Jesus was alive! They didn't know it at the time but they would never be the same again and neither would their world. The possibilities were endless!

These discoveries are still being made by followers of Jesus today!

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SERMON OUTLINES

God's Ultimate Makeover

Statements from the three men in today's readings (NIV) revealing how God's power transforms four key areas of their lives.

The life-sentence:

- 'I am ruined!' (Isaiah) (Isaiah 6:5)
- 'one abnormally born' (Paul) (1 Corinthians 15:8)
- 'I am a sinful man' (Peter) (Luke 5:8)

The life-style:

- 'I am a man of unclean lips' (Isaiah) (Isaiah 6:5)
- 'The least ... because I persecuted the church of God' (Paul) (1 Corinthians 15:9)
- 'Go away from me Lord' (Peter) (Luke 5:8)

The life-change:

- 'My eyes have seen the King' (Isaiah) (Isaiah 6:5)
- 'He appeared to me also' (Paul) (1 Corinthians 15:8)
- 'Because you say so I will let down the nets' (Peter) (Luke 5:5)

The life-work:

- 'Here am I. Send me!' (Isaiah) (Isaiah 6:8)
- 'But by the grace of God I am what I am' (Paul) (1 Corinthians 15:10)
- 'From now on [Peter] you will catch men' (Jesus) (Luke 5:10)



The Conversion of Saul from St Paul's Cathedral, London

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BACKGROUND MATERIAL FOR A SERMON/TALK ON 1 CORINTHIANS 15

Paul is writing to the people in the busy port of Corinth, an important trading place and one of Greece's many cities. Luke, Silas, Timothy and Paul himself had visited there on his second missionary journey and spent about eighteen months there.

There is evidence of some Jewish opposition to him at the time, and arguments amongst those who claimed to be believers. Paul feels it's time for him to restate some old truths about the gospel he had preached to them earlier. The very detail that Paul enters into in his explanation of the resurrection seems to suggest that misunderstandings over this lie at the root of their problems.

Paul also seems to be at great pains to point out the significance of those to whom the risen Jesus has appeared. Is this to help back up the reality of the event by the trustworthiness of the witnesses?

OUTLINE FOR A TALK OR MEDITATION

Think about how we behave. Are we growing and healthy as God would want us to be? Or are there things we need to prune? Like bad behaviour, unkind thoughts or words.

Think about how Jesus might help us to be that person through the things we hear about Him in the Bible.

Think about how we might be so that God would feel pleased with us, like a craftsman is pleased with something he has made.

Think about how Jesus might help us to be that person through the things we hear about Him in the Bible.

Let us take a moment to reflect on our identities – our inner and outer aspects – our body and spirit.

We are all shaped by many forces over which we have no control. We have little choice about our physical nature or the families and societies that we are born into. All of these powers help to shape us – both our inner and outer identity – and help to make us the people that we are now.

But we are not just fixed and unchanging. Each day we face choices and possibilities. Help us, Lord, to grow in body and spirit so that our lives reflect Your love.