

## Child-Centred Eucharist

*Being an inclusive church sometimes brings its challenges one of which is how to celebrate the Eucharist in a way that children can participate in fully and understand why we do what we do. This was one such Eucharistic liturgy that was written specifically to enable the children to not only receive the elements but to participate fully in telling the story, breaking and sharing and serving the bread and wine.*

*We began by watching a film, "The March of the Penguins" which tells the story of the Emperor penguins where the female penguins after laying their eggs carefully pass the eggs to the male penguin and head off to walk huge distances to find food leaving the male penguins to huddle together and survive the harshest months of the winter. They only survive by working together and waiting for the females to return just as the chicks are hatching and in need of food. After watching part of the film and having a discussion about the importance of working together we then cut out penguin shapes and wrote on to them the things we found difficult and needed help with.*

*We then shared in the following liturgy together, with an adult leading and the various children reading different parts of the liturgy and telling both the penguins story and interweaving this with the story of the last supper. Here I have left on the children's names rather than using "Child 1, 2 etc". We read out the things we found difficult from the penguins as part of our intercessions and commitment to work together. You may want to adapt this to suit the children of your own congregation..*

**Here's a table  
here's a table  
let us share  
let us share  
bread and wine  
bread and wine  
with Jesus here  
with Jesus here.** [tune Frère Jacques]

Leader: In the Jewish tradition it is the smallest child who asks the questions as to why the Passover is celebrated. It is the smallest child who asks the questions and allows the story to be told.

Imogen: Why are we here?

Leader: We gather together  
around this table  
to tell the stories  
that inspire our faith  
that help us  
become a community

Beth: Tell me a story.

Sam: The emperor penguins  
walk 70 miles  
across the frozen landscape  
hungry  
cold  
battered by storms  
huddled together

in order to survive  
no, not to survive  
but to protect  
what is weakest  
an egg  
the hope of new life  
cocooned against the harsh winter  
passed precariously  
from one penguin to another  
until one day  
the egg hatches  
a tiny, helpless  
baby penguin.

Imogen: Why do you tell this story?

Leader: Because it is here  
gathered together  
around this table  
that we bring the things  
we find difficult  
the things we cannot do alone.

Joel: On the penguins we wrote things we find difficult  
to remind us all to help each other.

*[Read penguins and place on table]*

Beth: Tell me the story about Jesus.

Rachel: Jesus shared lots of meals  
with his friends  
and with the ordinary people  
he met  
he told them stories  
of inviting people from the streets  
to great banquets  
of a run away son  
saying sorry and having a party  
of tiny seeds  
growing into huge trees  
he showed that by sharing a picnic lunch  
a crowd could be fed  
he sat a child on his knee  
to show that the smallest  
is the most important  
of all

Imogen: But why do we share bread?

Leader: The night before Jesus  
was killed

he shared a last meal  
with his friends  
he took bread  
and broke it  
and said:  
Imogen: this is my body  
broken for you

*[Joel to break bread]*

Leader: to show how he was broken  
on the cross  
to show that our world is broken  
by the things we do wrong  
when we share the bread  
Imogen: we say sorry  
and ask God to forgive us

*[Share bread - Imogen]*

Beth: Why do we share wine?

Leader: The night before Jesus  
was killed  
he shared a last meal  
with his friends  
he took wine  
and gave thanks  
and said

Beth: this is my blood  
poured out for you

*[Joel to hold up cup]*

Leader: to show that we are forgiven  
to show that we are loved by God  
to remind us to love one another  
to remind us that the small things  
are the most important  
Beth: to celebrate the hope  
of new life

*[Share wine - Beth]*

Joel: Let us pray:  
God who loves us very much,  
we have told new stories  
and listened to old stories  
we have said sorry  
and been forgiven  
we have become friends  
and learned that together

we can do the things  
we find difficult  
but most of all  
we have celebrated  
that with your love  
like the baby penguins  
there is hope of new life.

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