



What to do if your guest preacher does not turn up?

Just imagine this situation, you have planned a service and have invited a guest speaker to come and speak to the congregation and as the time grows nearer to the start of the service they have still not turned up. What can you do?

First, take a deep breath and don't panic. There is a resource easily available to use in the Mission Community, the already prepared reflection that is printed in the Beacon Parishes Notice Sheet. All you will have to do is simply read it or get someone else to read it for you. If you were going to lead a service on a different theme and have chosen different readings from ones in the lectionary this reflection may not be appropriate. Then I would suggest you try the following, based on the monastic tradition of Lectio Divina. It does not take any preparation as you just have to lead the congregation in their own reflection.

Here are the steps you need to follow:

1. Decide on which passage of scripture you want to use. It is probably an idea to choose the gospel reading as this will have just been read and everybody will now be familiar with the text.
2. Invite someone else to slowly read the passage again. This time ask the congregation to listen for a word or phrase that captures their attention. Then ask them, if they feel able, to share this word or phrase with the person next to them. Some may find this too uncomfortable or threatening and they should not feel pressurised. If this happens suggest that they just sit quietly and think about the word or phrase that stood out to them. This sharing of words should only take a minute or two.
3. Next, you invite a different person to read the passage again. Before it is read ask the congregation to try and identify why the word or phrase stood out and attracted their attention. Could it be trying to show them something new or different that had not struck them before. They may want to reflect where this passage touches what is happening in their own life. At the end of the reading again give time for people either to share with their neighbour or to sit quietly with their own thoughts. This sharing will be longer but still only 3-5 minutes.
4. After the sharing of ideas tell the congregation that there is now going to be a short time of silence where each person can answer for themselves "From what I've heard and shared, what might God be trying to tell me? Is God inviting me to change in any way?" and offer all their thought and reflections to God in prayer.

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