

Why a Drama instead of a Sermon?

For centuries, it has been the tradition of churches to include a sermon or message as part of worship. So why might we consider dropping the sermon from time to time, and replacing it with a drama?

Well, a sermon tends to focus on one person, speaking in an analytical style. It favours people whose preferred learning style is auditory. It presumes everyone learns in the same way. It also favours those who find it easy to sit still and focus.

A drama offers an opportunity to capture different learning styles. Some of us are visual learners and benefit immensely from seeing props and costumes that might feature in a drama. Some of us are kinetic learners and need the time and space to move our bodies in order to learn. Casting these learners in a dramatic role taps into that need. Dramas can feel more flexible and relaxed.

It might be easier to sit still and pay attention by adopting this mode. Everyone seems to have a more limited attention span and capacity for focus these days. Similarly, an engaging drama is easier to sit through. This can relieve the stress of parents and guardians who are sitting with wiggly kids and feeling embarrassed by their activity. And then things feel more flexible, perhaps the patience of the rest of the congregation is enhanced and they aren't so inclined to be critical of fidgeting and noise.

We've had strong, positive feedback about the occasional use of a drama to replace a sermon. When we adopted the Good Friday Drama, I had folks at the door who had been attending Good Friday worship for 60+ years make comments like "I never really understood the story of this day until we staged it like this." On Pentecost, we've been told by some that they could never picture or imagine what the coming of the Holy Spirit looked like or felt like, until the balloons dropped down on them from balcony.

I've become increasingly convinced that story is a powerful tool. It is the thing that continues to persuade and capture our imaginations. Using story and drama in lieu of a didactic sermon can help stretch the imaginations of those gathered and help the entire worshipping community grow in faith.