READY TO USE ALL-AGE SERVICE

# Crossing the river

MEETING AIM

To reflect on God’s faithfulness and consider how we can rely on him.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Joshua 3-4

BACKGROUND

This service is designed to be used with a congregation in a church building. However, with some adaptation, you should be able to use it on Zoom or other video-conferencing software.

God tells Joshua to build a monument from stones brought up from the Jordan, as a memorial to what he has done for them in stopping the river. In this service, we invite people to create their own memorials to what God has done for them, to serve as reminders that we can rely on him in the future.

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## WELCOME – 5 mins

As people arrive at the service, welcome them warmly! You might want to serve refreshments at the start, as this will ease people who don’t come regularly into an environment they may feel unsure about.

## OPENING ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

**OPTION ONE: Junk modelling**

**You will need:** junk such as boxes, cardboard tubes, yogurt pots and kitchen foil; sticky tape; scissors; glue sticks

Provide piles of junk and encourage the congregation to form small groups around the junk piles. Challenge everyone to work together to create a statue or memorial. Give a time limit and then get each group to show off their creation and explain what it’s about. (You could do this as an activity; people join in with as they arrive.)

**OPTION TWO:** Landmark quiz

**You will need:** photos of famous monuments – local, national and international

Before the service, collect together ten or so photos of famous monuments and put them into a PowerPoint presentation. Make sure you include some that children and young people will recognise. Have a quiz to see how many of the monuments people know. Can they identify what the monuments commemorate?

Show the congregation the pictures and ask them how these pictures make them feel. In smaller groups – this could be family groups or just people sitting near each other – ask everyone to discuss where they see God at work in these pictures. Say that if people don’t want to be part of a group, they can think about this on their own! After a few minutes, get some feedback.

## BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** a large box; two long garden canes or broom handles; twelve shoeboxes (or similar-sized boxes); blue material

Before the service, stick the two canes or handles to the large box, one on each side. Leave an equal length extending at both ends of the box so that it can be carried by volunteers front and back. Spread out the blue material across the front of your meeting space to represent the Jordan and position the shoeboxes in and around the ‘water’. Tell the story:

God had rescued the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt and had promised to take them to a new land where they could make their home. However, the Israelites had turned their back on God time and again. So they had to wander around the desert for 40 years before they were able to come into their new home. Finally they were there, standing on the banks of the river Jordan, looking across the water at the promised land. *Stand next to your river and point across the other side.*

Their leader, Joshua, spent time with God, and God told him what the people had to do. They had to make themselves acceptable to God and be ready to cross into the new land. Joshua told the priests to pick up the ark of the covenant, the sacred box that symbolised God’s presence with his people, and walk to the edge of the river. *Ask for some volunteers to pick up your box using the handles and stand at the edge of the blue material.*

As soon as their feet touched the water, the river stopped flowing. It backed up further upstream and dry land appeared in front of them. *Roll back the blue material to reveal dry land and some of the shoeboxes.*

The priests walked into the centre of the river. Ask them to do so. The people of God could cross the river Jordan without getting their feet wet! *Ask for some volunteers to be the people of God and cross the river with you.*

Joshua told one person from each of the twelve tribes of Israel to collect a stone from the riverbed and bring it across with them. *Ask your ‘people of God’ volunteers to collect the shoeboxes and bring them across.* He told them to use the stones to build a monument to remember what God had done. They do so. Finally, the priests carrying the ark walked up the bank and the waters flowed again. *They do so. Roll out the blue material once more.*

Joshua told the people: “When your children ask you what these stones mean, tell them what God did for you today!”

## SMALL GROUPS – 10 mins

**You will need:** copies of the questions below; Bibles

Encourage people to discuss these questions in smaller groups. Give each group a copy of these questions:

* What did you like about the story?
* What surprised you?
* Why did the people build a monument?
* What does this story tell you about God?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

## REVIEW – 5 mins

**You will need:** roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback on the questions from ‘Small groups’, using a microphone to hear people’s contributions if your meeting space is large.

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting space or in different breakout rooms.

**OPTION ONE:** Stone decorating

**You will need:** smooth, flat pebbles; art materials

Encourage people to think about what God has done for them, then create a memorial for that particular event or action by decorating a stone. They should take the stone home after the service and place it somewhere in their house where they will see it regularly and remember God’s faithfulness to them.

**OPTION TWO:** Discussion

**You will need:** volunteers to facilitate discussion; paper and pens

Gather people together in small groups, each one with a facilitator, and challenge them to think about the difference what they have discovered today will make in their lives.

**OPTION THREE:** Psalm writing

**You will need:** Bibles; pens and paper

Ask people to write their own psalm – a song or poem to God that celebrates what he has done for them. Use the book of Psalms as inspiration. If people are struggling for ideas, they can use the format of Psalm 136 as a starting point.

## CLOSING – 5 mins

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

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