

Early Word

Easter 2, Year B

By Beth Barnett

This is an Early Word engagement using 1 John 1:1-2:2, telling the story of God that we have encountered, and exploring the key words: testify, declare, seen, heard, touched.

You will need:

- 2 cm diameter, 10 length pillar candle
- Taper
- Matches
- Backing tin
- Wooden board
- Small table
- 1 John 1:1-2:2 displayed on screen or provided as print copies for each person in your gathering, words highlighted in colour as instructed below (powerpoint is included in the Risen and Real Resources)

Time required:

5 minutes

Things to think about beforehand

In this reading I have used the English phrase 'Share in' as a fit translation for koinonia. The NRSV (though usually a reliably inclusive translation) uses the word fellowship which is less accessible to everyday Australians.

Connect:

We are going to play a game together.

In this game three people are going to leave our space and go into another room.

We are then going to have something happen here, that we will all encounter together.

Then the three volunteers who have been out will be brought back in, and we will try and tell them what we have seen and heard and experienced as accurately as we can.

- *Choose 3 volunteers of different ages to leave the space.*
- *When they have gone announce that you have a candle surrounded by black paper. Just the wick should be exposed at the top. The candle should be set on a large baking tray. The baking tray should be set on a wooden board, on a clearly visible table. The candle is in darkness.*
- *Light the candle using a taper to ignite the wick.*
- *The flame should quickly burn down to the black paper and set it alight, burning all or most of the black paper and leaving the candle revealed.*
- *As you do this remind the gathering that they are going to be challenged to 'testify' to what has happened. Will they be able to tell those who weren't here what they saw?*
- *While someone goes out the fetch the volunteers who left the space, invite those left to practice telling the person next to them what they encountered, and hide the baking tray, candle and burnt remains of the paper, leaving only the empty board.*
- *As the volunteers arrive back in the space ask those who witnessed what happened to say what they saw and hear and experienced. Use the key words from 1 John 1: 'testify', 'declare', 'witness'.*
- *This drawing out the testimony from your gathering needs to be led by someone with great facilitation skills, able to inspire people to share a bit and keep contributions coming from a wide range of people, not being monopolized by one or two dominant voices.*
- *Also – as people begin to testify/tell what they experienced, point out when they use their hands to indicate something and 'show' what they mean. Develop the group's awareness that our best ways of declaring and telling involve our whole bodies and selves.*



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Continue...

We have just done some thing like the early followers of Jesus.

They had seen and heard and touched and experiences the Risen Lord Jesus, and they began to testify or witness or declare to others what they had encountered.

They did this with words and with their whole bodies – in sharing life together fairly, making sure the poor among them were cared for, and following Jesus example of justice and mercy.

Jesus early followers had seen Jesus' human physical body raised from death – this showed them that human bodies and how they live, what we do with our bodies, how bodies are looked after and treated is important.

We'll read about that later* in a part of the Bible that comes after the stories of Jesus' life called Acts - Acts 4:32-35.

But for now we are going to read a part of the Bible called 1 John. The first letter of John – written to encourage followers of Jesus not to give up, and to keep declaring what they have seen and heard and experienced of Jesus.

As we listen to the passage today we are going to watch out for the words that encourage followers of Jesus (like us) to tell, declare and testify to what we have seen and heard and experienced.

There are two things we want to affirm and remind each other of as we listen – one is that we are called to be witnesses, testifiers, declarers.

Second is that we don't need to come up with anything to tell – we simply are to declare whatever we've seen heard or experienced of Jesus.

So each time there is a word highlighted in blue, we will pause to call out encouragement to one another – calling out “Testify!” or “Preach it sister” or “Preach it brother”

For the words 'Seen' or 'looked at' we'll call 'Hey Look!'

For 'heard' we'll call 'Listen up!'

Finally, the writer is reminding the community that we share in this experience of Jesus together, and we share in the joy of declaring it together, So we will simply join together to share in speaking that word 'share' each time it appears, highlighted in green.

Appoint a volunteer to lead/champion each of these responses, run a quick practice, then proceed with the reading.

Read slowly and expressively, giving space for participation and reflection as you read.

Read a second time, allowing the rhythms and dynamics of the text to make their impact again.



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1 John 1:1-2:2

1:1 We **declare** to you what was from the beginning, what we have **heard**, what we have **seen** with our eyes, what we have **looked at** and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life--

1:2 this life was revealed, and we have **seen** it and **witnessed** to it, and **declare** to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us--

1:3 we **declare** to you what we have **seen** and **heard** so that you also **share** in this life with us; and truly our **sharing** in life is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

1:4 We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

1:5 This is the message we have **heard** from him and **proclaim** to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

1:6 If we say that we **share** with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true;

1:7 but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we **share** with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1:9 If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

2:2 and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.



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