

Looking for a way to engage your congregation in the MDG's and in new forms of worship? You've come to the right place. Perhaps you've heard about them on the news or by word of mouth. Perhaps, you are just now hearing about the U2charist. What is it?

As Since General Convention, it seems like everyone is wanting to hold a U2charist (a service of Holy Eucharist using the music of the Irish rock band U2) to raise awareness about the Millennium Development Goals.

U2charist is an Episcopal Eucharist service that features the music of the rock band U2 and a message about God's call to rally around the Millennium Development Goals. The U2charist is a great opportunity to reach out to the people in your congregation and larger community, especially young people. This service the music and message of U2 about global reconciliation, justice for the poor and oppressed, and the importance of caring for your neighbor. Led by the global MDG ambassador, Bono, U2 is calling people worldwide to a deeper faith and engagement with God's mission. The U2charist seeks to be an extension of this ministry.

The Rev. Paige Blair Rector of St. George's Episcopal Church in York Harbor ME. has been a leading proponent of the U2charist Liturgy in the United States and around the world. Below in her own words on how she became involved in the U2charist Services and a link to her parish webpage which contains links to many U2charist Resources

To find out more about what U2charists are and how to host one go to the U2charist pages of the EGR website at <http://www.e4gr.org/u2charists/service.html>

What is a U2 Eucharist (or U2charist)?

by the Rev. Paige Blair



The background in brief: my parishioners and I noticed that U2 was popping up in conversation at the church in many different settings -adult education classes, meetings, coffee hour-and we kept finding ourselves talking about how U2 had been important on our spiritual journeys. I had just read Get Up Off Your Knees, a collection of sermons based on U2 lyrics, and floated the idea of a service in which all the music, from hymns to "service music" (like the Gloria or Kyrie) would be by U2, and a number of parishioners in different generations were really excited. So we built a team to design the liturgy and choose the music, and to ask questions like, How do we get the sound loud enough? and How do we play the music? a DJ? A CD? Powerpoint? We chose powerpoint since we figured we'd want the lyrics visible and for people to be hands-free for dancing and clapping if possible. Powerpoint slides with the

lyrics of the music and also the rest of the service on them, coordinated with the playing of the music, has been the best tool to allow full participation from the audience. We have also provided a paper bulletin with the same information as the powerpoint slides.

I also floated the idea among my clergy colleagues on line. They had great ideas about which songs would be most powerful, and one sent a liturgy that had been done a few years before at another church, around the time of *Get Up Off Your Knees*' publication.

The first U2charist service here at St. George's was July 31, 2005 , and it was a roaring success. Over 130 people came, many people from outside the church as well as regular members. Youth and young adults and even older adults singing and dancing in the aisles and praising God at the top of their voices to the song *Yahweh*, among others."

By February 2006, we had done three such services, the last of these being a baptism U2 service—it was incredibly moving. In March 2006 we began "taking the service on the road" to other churches that had heard about our U2charist service and wanted us to bring it to them (such as the service in Providence, Rhode Island). We did two in March and four in May 2006, and the summer and fall of 2006 are looking busy.

The liturgy itself is pretty traditional—it has all the usual required elements: a Gospel reading, prayers, and communion from an authorized prayer book. The music is really what is different. And yet not so different. It is rock, but it is deeply and overtly spiritual.

One element that is very important is our using this opportunity to teach people about the Millennium Development Goals to eradicate extreme poverty and global AIDS. Facts about extreme poverty are included in the powerpoint slides, particularly during the instrumental parts of songs. The sermon is designed to raise awareness, as well as empower the congregation to take action and do their part to make poverty history (such as signing the ONE Declaration) . I am the New England coordinator for Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation, the body in our church working to resource our denomination to address and work towards the Millennium Development Goals, and so my taking the U2charist on the road and preaching comes out of this role in particular.

Along those lines, our agreement with U2's publishing company is that any offering taken at the service is given to a charity that is fighting extreme poverty or AIDS. (Note that the offering is not given to the ONE Campaign. ONE does not raise money—as they say in their motto: "ONE isn't asking for your money. ONE is asking for your voice...").

As for others types of services.... we have three services every Sunday morning, that are more traditional: a spoken service, a service designed to be kid-friendly, and a familiar, traditional service with organ and choir. One of the reasons I think the U2charist has gone over so well, even among our older members, is that we have not held the U2 services in the morning on Sunday—so the more traditional members are still getting a service that "feeds them." And since they are getting fed at their usual service, they are much more willing to come back at night and check out the U2 Eucharist, or at least, to be supportive in other ways and cheer us on from the sidelines.

Addendum: In Response to the Blogosphere...by the Rev. Paige Blair

Every journalist who has contacted me asks, "aren't you encountering any resistance?" I have been very proud of my parish and my diocese in saying "No. I really have not." The only negativity I've run across has been in the blogosphere, by people largely uninformed and without an experience of a U2 Eucharist as done by St. George's, either "at home" or on the road. (We certainly cannot take any responsibility for U2 services done at other churches in which we have not been involved.)

One of the quirks of the way many blogosphere communities operate is that folks can talk about someone, or about someone's work, with no input from that person... And the person may not know the conversation has happened until days later. By which time the conversation has, understandably, moved on to something more timely.

In response to some of the conversation in the blogosphere about the U2 Eucharist, most of which I came upon several days after the conversation ended, I offer the following reflections, clarifications, and information...

Just to clarify a few things that aren't clear from the articles floating around the web& or the opinions floating around the blogosphere.

Speaking for St. George's: we did not set out to "bring in the youth." Rather, we were hoping for an intergenerational worship experience, and that is what we've had. We most certainly are not "dispensing with the older," as some have suggested. Not only do we hold the services at night so as not to interfere with the morning services and the people fed by them, but at our U2 Eucharists, you will see 70-year olds, 40, 30, 17, 7-year olds... all raising their voices to praise God singing "Pride (In the Name of Love)" or yearning for the inbreaking of the kingdom of God by singing "40."

For those concerned we're not being Anglican enough or churchy enough, Classical Anglicanism was in part about worshipping Almighty God in the vernacular. Bach and Handel are amazing, but have not been the vernacular for quite a while... Someday U2 may no longer be the vernacular—let's just hope we know when that happens lest we become like those thinking a "folk mass" is contemporary.

New Age? Hardly. The sermon at the service in Providence featured in the article on the web was followed by the standard creed you'll find on p 358 of the Book of Common Prayer 1979. The Baptismal rite at our third U2 service at St. George's was also straight out of the Book of Common Prayer.

As for whether or not U2's music is appropriate for a Eucharist (as opposed to at a youth group meeting), I offer "Yahweh," a song of Eucharistic self-offering ("...we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies..." [Book of Common Prayer, Rite I Eucharist])

Take these shoes
Click clacking down some dead end street
Take these shoes

And make them fit
Take this shirt
Polyester white trash made in nowhere
Take this shirt And make it clean, clean
Take this soul
Stranded in some skin and bones
Take this soul
And make it sing

Yahweh, Yahweh
Always pain before a child is born
Yahweh, Yahweh
Still I'm waiting for the dawn
Take these hands
Teach them what to carry
Take these hands
Don't make a fist
Take this mouth
So quick to criticise
Take this mouth
Give it a kiss

Yahweh, Yahweh
Always pain before a child is born
Yahewh, Yahweh
Still I'm waiting for the dawn
Still waiting for the dawn, the sun is coming up
The sun is coming up on the ocean
This love is like a drop in the ocean
This love is like a drop in the ocean
Yahweh, Yahweh
Always pain before a child is born
Yahweh, tell me now
Why the dark before the dawn?

Take this city
A city should be shining on a hill
Take this city
If it be your will
What no man can own, no man can take
Take this heart
Take this heart Take this heart
And make it break

Paige+