

# Breathing Space

Collective Worship  
Guidelines  
for Church schools in the  
Diocese of Chelmsford



The Church of England  
in Essex and East London

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Diocese of Chelmsford

## Introduction

Worship is central to the life of every Church school. These guidelines are here to give you background information, ideas and resources to create worship that is meaningful for all who participate. It is designed as a springboard to good practice and a useful tool for teachers, heads, clergy and governors.

As a web based resource, it will be added to over time so that it reflects and shares the worship that takes place in schools around the Diocese. It is an arena in which you can communicate ideas and approaches that have worked well in your school; themes that have engaged the children, a resource that you have found useful, events that have enriched the life of the school, perhaps some special Easter or Christmas worship or a school Eucharist. Keep in touch with your Schools Adviser or with Alison Seaman, the Diocesan RE and Worship adviser ([aseaman@chelmsford.anglican.org](mailto:aseaman@chelmsford.anglican.org)). They all offer support and training in collective worship that can be tailor-made to the needs of your school. You could also refer to the Learning and Development Programme Course Booklet (available from the Education Team Administrator, 01245 294440) or follow [this link](#).

My hope is that this resource will offer inspiration, boost confidence and remind us that worship can be the heartbeat of the school, bringing life and energy to all in the community.

Rob Fox  
Diocesan Director of Education

## Collective worship: what does it look like?

Collective worship can be like a breathing space in the school day. For everyone who participates, the time feels different. It's when people in the school get together; the pace is slowed down; there's time to think about what's important in everyone's lives and in the life of the school. There's often laughter and celebration, sometimes sadness and tears; there are big questions to be asked and puzzling, perplexing and difficult situations to be explored about our lives and our world. This is a sanctuary in the hurly burly of school life and it's precious.

So what helps to create this breathing space in the life of the school? Each worship leader will do things slightly differently; their personality will be reflected in the way they present the session and the way they communicate with the children. There are, however, some threads that can hold together a good act of worship and help to make it the heartbeat of the school, bringing life and energy to all in the community.

When we talk about the curriculum we use words like 'teach about', 'know', and 'understand'. In worship the emphasis shifts to 'exploring', 'encountering' and 'experiencing', for example:

### Explore

- Human stories which raise questions about meaning and purpose in life
- Spiritual and moral issues
- The part played by religion in everyday life
- Ideas about God and the way people of faith relate to God
- The Bible and its teachings and other religious texts
- Christian values

### Encounter

- Christianity as a contemporary, diverse and world-wide tradition
- Christianity in action
- People of faith
- Worship and prayer as part of the natural rhythm of the day
- The annual cycle of feasts and festivals of the Christian year
- The Bible as a source of inspiration

### Experience

- Gathering together and building community: sharing achievements, disappointments, joys and sorrows
- What it means to be part of a community
- A sense of awe wonder, mystery and silence
- A community where faith is taken seriously
- Worship that is enjoyable, creative and imaginative

## How do we do it?

Imagine an act of worship that:

- Slows down the pace.
- Creates a safe space to think 'big'.
- Gives children an opportunity to think about and learn about God, about others, about themselves.
- Raises questions that might not have an answer.
- Offers breathing space in a hectic day.
- Enables children to make connections based on their own experience.

Here's how...

### Crossing the threshold

Create a sense of occasion; anticipation that something important is about to happen. The worship leader needs to be ready; prepare the space; create a focal point (see p15 for suggestions); have any resources to hand; something to create atmosphere e.g. music as the children enter the space.

### Welcome and getting ready

Mark the entry into this special time together by, for example, lighting a candle.

Use a familiar greeting; this could be a liturgical greeting e.g.

Leader: The Lord be with you.	Leader: The Lord is here.
All: And also with you.	All: His Spirit is with us.

Encourage stillness that will help the children to get ready for the next stage of the act of worship (see Stilling Strategies p14) time will be needed to appreciate the different elements of the act of worship and to begin to explore its ideas.

### Listening and responding

- thinking
- sharing
- listening
- reflecting

These are the basic ingredients of a quality act of worship. There is wisdom in the saying 'less is more', so keep it simple. It's easy to try to pack too much into one session.

Use good quality and interesting visual stimuli to engage interest and help to draw children into the experience.

Encourage children to wonder; to play with ideas and possibilities. Use open questions that have a wide variety of responses and where there are no right or wrong answers. Begin with the words, 'I wonder....' this opens out the questions and encourages creativity and imaginative. Give space for the children to explore ideas and encourage them to make connections. This will give them the confidence to make meaning themselves and to deepen their experience of the worship.

### **Sending out**

Endings are as important as beginnings. Mark the transition back into the school day with a simple ritual - it could be something as basic as blowing out the candle and then playing music as the children leave.

### **And finally...**

The word worship sometimes makes people think they have to be very serious and pious or try to be like a caricature of a vicar. Just relax and be yourself.

## **Where and when?**

There are three guiding principles in law for establishing a pattern for collective worship;

It must be daily

It can be at any time of day

It can be for any grouping, e.g. whole school, key stage, class

Schools can adopt a pattern appropriate to their circumstances. It is good practice to evolve a pattern that is a mixture of these experiences.

## Why collective worship?

When people of faith gather together to worship, their worship reflects the beliefs and practices of the group. It is known as **corporate** worship (corpus = body); they are worshipping together as one body.

**Collective** worship is an activity designated by and peculiar to the education legislation of England and Wales. This is not the same as an act of worship in a particular faith community. In schools, there is unlikely to be a corporate body. Christians may only appear as individuals, alongside others who either do not believe or are believing adherents of other religions. The law requires all schools, including Church of England aided and voluntary controlled schools, to offer an act of collective worship for their pupils, every day. This can be held at any time of day and in any grouping. Frustratingly, the legislation does not define what is meant by 'collective worship'.

The only guidance on the law came in the government circular 1/94 and this reminds schools that collective worship cannot assume a shared set of beliefs and values for its participants. Collective worship needs to recognise the collective nature of the gathering and should be '...appropriate to the family backgrounds of the pupils and their ages and aptitudes...'<sup>1</sup>

In community schools collective worship is required to be 'broadly Christian'.

### Collective worship in a church school context

Collective worship is at the very heart of daily life in a Church school..<sup>2</sup>

In Church schools while the provision for collective worship is the same, the content of the worship must reflect the Christian foundation of the school. The Trust Deeds of the majority of Church of England schools refer to worship that reflects the basic tenets and traditions of the Anglican Church. And so, worship in a church school should be explicitly Christian, as opposed to the broadly Christian worship required in a community school.

This requirement for distinctiveness in the content of collective worship in a Church school does not prohibit worship that is educational and appropriate for all involved. A former Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, said collective worship should:

Nourish those of faith  
Encourage those of other faiths  
Challenge those who have no faith

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<sup>1</sup> DfE Circular 1/94

<sup>2</sup> *Be Bold*, A Seaman et al, Church House Publishing p24

Collective worship should recognise that the school community is made up of a collection of people from a variety of different backgrounds. In some parts of the Diocese of Chelmsford the cultural and religious mix is more varied than others, reflecting the diversity of society as a whole, but in all schools there is likely to be a range of people, of faith and of no faith, who are served by the school.

When collective worship is inclusive, it is sensitive to the range of people served by the school. It should seek to spiritually nurture and to be a quality experience for all participants. Those privileged to lead worship should always invite, but never seek to compel, participation; those participating will be at different stages of spiritual development and should feel free to respond and participate in ways appropriate to them.

#### **In summary**

It should aim to be **inclusive**: good collective worship engages everyone present in his/her own way.

It should aim to be **curricular**: good collective worship shows appropriate links with classroom activities, the curriculum and school life.

It should aim to be **educational**: good collective worship develops children's ideas about God, about themselves and the world around them.

It should aim to be **reflective**: to offer breathing space, to be still, to wonder, to be uplifted; to nurture an awareness of God.

It should aim to be **central to school life**.

## So what do we mean by Christian worship?<sup>3</sup>

There are many different Christian churches and Christians worship in many different ways; within the Anglican tradition alone there is wide diversity of practice. Underpinning all this diversity is a foundation of key Christian beliefs at the core of which is the understanding of God as Trinity.

Christian belief	What does this mean for Christians?	How can this be reflected in school worship?
God as Creator	God is the source, the maker and sustainer of all that is. Therefore the universe is intrinsically good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage a sense of awe and wonder.</li> <li>• Foster respect for each other, for the world and for its peoples.</li> </ul>
Jesus	Christians believe Jesus was both human and divine. His life, especially his birth death and resurrection, lie at the heart of Christian understanding of the strength and power of God's love. Jesus is the ultimate and complete revelation of God's love for creation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the major Christian festivals in the church calendar.</li> <li>• Listen to stories from the Gospels.</li> <li>• Use these to reflect on the life death and resurrection of Jesus.</li> </ul>
the Holy Spirit	Christians believe the Holy Spirit sustains and energises individuals and the church. The Holy Spirit is the outpouring of God's love for creation and lies at the heart of the Christian experience of renewal, reconciliation, trust and forgiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories of individuals and organisations inspired by faith to work for a better world.</li> <li>• Explore the work of charitable organisations working with the poor and marginalised.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> This section is based on 'When we Speak of Worship...', chapter 4 of *Open the Door*, Brown et al, The National Society and the Diocese of Oxford. The publication is now out of print.



<p>The Trinity</p>	<p>The belief that God is revealed in three ways: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and yet remains one God.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore ways Christians down the ages have tried to express this mystery e.g. in symbol and in art.</li> <li>• Comparisons can be made between the relational nature of the Trinity and the experience of being part of a school community based on sound relationships.</li> <li>• Use Trinitarian prayers e.g. the Grace, prayers from the Celtic tradition. <i>(NB a point of sensitivity. Some pupils, especially from the Jewish and Muslim communities, find this doctrine problematic and will not wish to participate in such prayers.</i></li> </ul>
<p>The Bible</p>	<p>The Bible has unique authority as God's Word and its use is central in Christian worship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore and reflect on Bible stories from Old and New Testaments.</li> <li>• Follow the pattern of the liturgical calendar when choosing themes for different times of the year.</li> </ul>

## How can we 'be Anglican' ...?

The Church of England is part of a world-wide community of Christians, the Anglican Communion. Church of England schools are charged to 'be Anglican' in the way in which they express their distinctiveness in the community they serve. One of the ways this can be expressed most clearly is through the pattern and content of worship. When worship lies at the heart of the school, all its activities are undergirded and strengthened by it. Christian values can be reflected and affirmed and the spirituality of pupils and staff can be nurtured.

Some of the essential features within the rich traditions of Anglican prayer and worship around the world offer some elements that can be drawn upon. So, here are some ways Church of England schools can be Anglican....

### Prayer

- There are many collections of prayers for children widely available including prayers written by children. (Lion publish several.) A general rule of thumb when saying prayers with children is to use few words rather than many.
- Encourage times of stillness and silence. Prayer is as much about listening as talking.
- Learn prayers by heart. Use the Lord's Prayer on a regular basis; it can be said, sung, signed.
- There are many traditional prayers noted for the beauty of rhythm of their language, e.g. the prayers of St Francis, St Patrick, St Ignatius. The Anglican tradition also offers a rich heritage of hymns and psalms. (see Prayers and Psalms p17)

### The Bible

- Using the Bible as a source book for inspiration and learning.
- Following the pattern of readings and themes to be found in Common Worship<sup>4</sup>.

### Christian symbols

- Used in worship and seen around the school
- Used as part of a focal table for worship, for reflection, or as focus for a worship theme.

### Greetings

- Learn some traditional greetings and responses e.g.  
The Lord be with you/ And also with you  
or  
The Lord is here/His spirit is with us
- Share the peace  
Peace be with you/And also with you

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<sup>4</sup> *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, Church House Publishing, 2000.

### **Holding a regular pattern of worship**

The Anglican Church has a tradition of a regular, daily pattern of worship. There are also special acts of worship on Sundays, weekdays and to mark major events in life e.g. baptism, marriage, or death. Central significance is given to the Eucharist while acknowledging the variety of other forms of worship. Church schools can follow in the footsteps of this tradition by offering a regular pattern of worship and for some schools this will include a school Eucharist.

- Worship at regular times in the week
- Mark key events (beginning or leaving school, starting and ending a school year)
- Worship can also help to shoulder great celebrations as well as disturbing events, whether local or national.

### **Liturgical year**

The major seasons, festivals and Saints' Days provide a structure for Anglican worship which should be followed in schools.

- Plan worship themes around the major Christian seasons.
- Use liturgical colours for a focus table.
- Make links between the colours seen in church at different times of year and the colours used in school worship.

### **Ecumenism**

The Anglican tradition has a long commitment to dialogue with people from different Christian churches.

- Invite members of different Christian denominations to lead worship.

### **Dialogue with other faiths**

- Welcome, encouragement and respect for children of other faiths.
- Share in a commitment to dialogue with other faiths.
- Celebration of shared values and beliefs.

## **Working with diversity and striving for inclusivity in Church school collective worship.**

- Build positive relationships with families and local faith communities.
- Encourage all children and all members of staff to be present for collective worship.
- Be clear when meeting new parents about what happens in worship and the ways this reflects the foundation of the school.
- Reassure children and their families that their presence in collective worship is valued and that they will not be required to say or do anything that challenges their integrity.
- Encourage children in finding ways to use prayer times for their own devotions or reflections.
- Give opportunities for silent reflection to enable all pupils to make a personal response. Raise awareness of shared values and celebrate achievements which cross cultural and religious boundaries.
- Respect the integrity of different faith and life stances.

## Legal Background

### Requirement for a daily act of worship and right of withdrawal

1. All pupils in attendance at a maintained school should take part in an act of collective worship every day unless the parent requests that the child be wholly or partly excused from attendance at the religious worship in the school.
2. The act of worship need not take place with the whole school together but can take place in classes or groups of children e.g. key stage groups.
3. Acts of worship should be appropriate for the pupils taking into account their age, aptitude and family backgrounds.
4. Parents' right to withdraw their child/children from collective worship should be made clear in the school's policy documents on worship. Church schools may make clear to parents, at the time of enrolment, that the act of worship is central to the life of the school.
5. Teachers also have a right to withdraw from worship. VA schools, however, expect teachers, whose National Society contracts include clauses on religious education and respecting the character of the foundation, to take part in collective worship.
6. The daily act of worship should normally take place on the school premises. All schools can now do this elsewhere e.g. from time to time, or on special occasions, the school may wish to hold an act of worship in the local parish church.

### Responsibility for the arrangements for the daily act of worship

1. Arrangements for collective worship in voluntary schools should be made by the governing body after consultation with the Headteacher.
2. It is the duty of the governing body to make necessary arrangements, within the law, for collective worship to be consistent with the purpose of the school (the Trust Deed).
3. The trust deed will probably require that the school adheres to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England i.e. worship in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit and recognising the unique authority and central place of the Bible.
4. The Diocesan Board of Education should be kept fully informed of all matters relating to collective worship in diocesan schools. The diocesan Education team monitors the provision of collective worship in all voluntary schools through SIAS inspection reports and by direct contact with schools by members of the education team.

### Curriculum time

The act of worship is not designated as curriculum time and should not be counted into any part of the curriculum (e.g. collective worship cannot be counted as part of the RE curriculum).

## **SACRE**

Every Local Authority is required to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) whose duties include advising the LA on what needs to be done to improve religious education and collective worship for schools in its area. Although SACREs have no direct responsibility for collective worship in church schools, the Diocese is represented on them through members of the C of E committee (one of the 4 committees that constitute every SACRE).

## Stilling Strategies

Some stilling strategies for use in collective worship

- Choose appropriate music for the beginning and end of the act of worship - usually something quiet and conducive to reflection.
- Spend a few minutes, beginning and end, sitting quietly, listening to the music rather than abruptly switching it off. It is part of the act of worship.
- Take time to settle the children; encourage them to take responsibility for finding a comfortable sitting position; explain why this is important for getting ready for what's to come.
- Make good use of a quieter but clear, firm, tone of voice and a slower delivery. This will aid concentration and create a calm, reflective atmosphere.
- Include pauses e.g. before and after prayers, before dismissal. Give children time to think.
- Reflection is a skill. Some people will take to it naturally but most of us need guidance. Help the children to find the best ways for them to develop the skill; remind them frequently about the ways you do things in worship and why. Encourage them to take responsibility; to find the best ways to help themselves and others to get ready to listen and reflect.
- Consider different seating arrangements e.g. in the round so that none of the children are too far from the leader, encouraging a more intimate atmosphere.
- Make sure that all the elements of the act of worship hang together and contribute to the overall theme. This will constantly reinforce the theme of the worship.

## Creating a 'Worship Box'.

In church schools, having a display/table/focal point as an aid to reflection is accepted as good practice. It's a good way for the school to share its distinctiveness with the whole community. So, how can this be set up? How can the children be involved? What resources are needed?

Working together to create a **worship box** is one very tangible way of involving children and adults in the organisation of a focal point for collective worship. It also offers a process through which the school can investigate both the purpose of reflection in worship, and the artefacts which might support it.

In order to demonstrate the value and importance of the focal point, the box should be simple but good quality. It could be a commercially produced, for example, household and DIY stores stock attractive wooden boxes or you may have someone associated with the school who could make one.

The box is used to store a variety of pictures and artefacts but can itself form part of the focal point. Children and other members of the school community consider what would help them to reflect and make suggestions for what might be included.

Here is a **list of suggestions** to get you started. Why not involve parents, governors, children or members of the parish in gathering these together.

- A set of simple cloths or pieces of felt in liturgical colours (purple, red, green, white).
- A selection of candles and candle holders. These could include an advent candle, a Baptism candle, candles displaying Christian symbols, an Amnesty International candle.
- A base for an Advent ring
- A candle snuffer
- A free standing cross or crucifix
- A selection of other symbols e.g. an ICTHUS ( fish symbol), praying hands
- A small icon (keep this wrapped to protect the image)
- A glass bowl to hold water/pebbles/glass beads
- A set of simple nativity figures.
- A bible, prayer book and simple book stand. The prayer book could be one made by pupils, containing their favourite prayers, or prayers they have written.

Organisations like Traidecraft (<http://www.traidcraft.co.uk/>) stock artefacts from around the world reflecting the multicultural nature of Christianity. Schools that have participated in the Kenya Project may well have Christian artefacts gathered on a visit to Kenya.



The contents of the box should be reviewed in response to suggestions from adults and children who could also be encouraged bring in suitable items from home to add to the box.

When children help to prepare the hall for worship they can liaise with the worship leader about what is needed for the focal area to support the theme of the week. They then make decisions about which items to take from the box and choose how to place them on the focal table or in the focal area. As well as involving the children in preparing for collective worship, this is also a good opportunity to teach about careful, respectful, handling of religious artefacts.

The school may want to consider a smaller box to use in the classroom for class based worship.

And finally...

To demonstrate the importance of the box, why not ask a member of the parish clergy to come into school and bless it during an act of whole school worship.

## Prayers and Psalms

<p><b>The Lord's Prayer</b> Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation But deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen</p>	<p><b>The Prayer of St Richard of Chichester</b> O most merciful Redeemer, friend and brother: may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day.</p>
<p><b>The Prayer of St Ignatius Loyola</b>  Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do your will</p>	<p><b>A Prayer attributed to St Francis of Assisi</b> Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy;</p> <p>O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.</p> <p>For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.</p>

### A Prayer of St Patrick

May the strength of God pilot us  
May the power of God preserve us,  
May the wisdom of God instruct us,  
May the hand of God protect us,  
May the way of God direct us,  
May the shield of God defend us.  
May Christ be with us,  
Christ above us  
Christ in us  
Christ before us  
This day and evermore.

### Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside still waters;  
He restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
For his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil;  
For you are with me;  
Your rod and your staff-  
They comfort me.  
You prepare a table for me  
In the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
My cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
All the days of my life,  
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
My whole life long.

### Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.  
He who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.

The LORD is your keeper;  
the LORD is your shade at your right  
hand.  
The sun shall not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.

The LORD will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.  
The LORD will keep  
your going out and your coming in  
from this time on and for evermore

### Psalm 150

Praise the Lord

Praise God in his sanctuary;  
praise him in his mighty  
firmament!

Praise him for his mighty deeds;  
praise him according to his  
surpassing greatness!

Praise him with trumpet sound;  
praise him with lute and harp!  
Praise him with tambourine and  
dance;  
praise him with strings and pipe!  
Praise him with clanging cymbals;  
praise him with loud clashing  
cymbals!

Let everything that breathes praise  
the LORD!

Praise the LORD!

## Ways of praying with children

### Space for prayer...

When prayers are led by one person, leave pauses for the children to silently offer their own prayers. Explain what you're doing so that the children know what's happening and can participate if they wish.

### Prayer hands...

Use each finger and thumb for a different item for prayer. This is great for helping children to get a feel for how to structure prayers. E.g. thumb = thank you, first finger = families etc.

### Prayer walking...

Some find it hard to sit still and concentrate - organised prayer at these times can be tough for them. Plan a prayer journey with pauses for prayer. At each stopping place create a focus e.g. a poster/picture, an icon an object, some words.

### Headline prayers...

From time to time produce a headline to use as a focus for prayers.

### Responsive prayers...

These can really support children and adults who feel uncomfortable about prayer (e.g. "I'm not sure what to say"). They can offer a form of words for the feelings people have but cannot always find the means to express. This is also an important opportunity to encourage familiarity with ways of praying used in the Anglican tradition.

- Use a psalm and have a response after each verse.
- Here is an example of a sorry prayer (confession) with a response:  
Loving God,  
For the times we think better of ourselves than we ought  
**We are sorry and accept your love**  
For the times we have not been honest  
**We are sorry and accept your love**  
For the times we have been unfair  
**We are sorry and accept your love**
- Encourage the children to write prayers and create their own responses e.g.  
As we go through this day  
**Help us Lord**  
As we listen and learn  
**Help us Lord**  
As we talk and play  
**Help us Lord**

### Use a hymn or song as a prayer...

Some songs are particularly suitable for being said without music and make really good prayers. You can easily add responses too (see previous suggestion). This offers a great opportunity to think about words we would normally sing and also for learning a song.

### Collective prayers...

The worship leader can offer a line of a prayer, each year group or key stage can have their own response, for example:

Leader	Loving God, we thank you for all the good things that have happened this week
KS1	We thank you
KS2	And we praise you
All	Amen
Leader	Loving God, we pray for our families and friends, for our homes and our neighbours
KS1	We thank you
KS2	And we praise you
All	Amen

### Envelope prayers...

Have three large envelopes one saying 'sorry', the second one 'please', and the third one 'thank you'. Collect children's prayers on these themes in the envelopes. For your prayer time, invite children to choose one prayer from each envelope to share with the group.

### Wonder wall...

**This is a creative-expressive prayer activity. Use an area of wall accessible to the children to designate as your 'wonder wall'.**

You will need:

- Paper, pens, crayons, paints, card, and craft materials such as ribbon, sequins, glitter.
- Make a list of key words from the theme for collective worship e.g. trust, giving, faith, honesty, God, forgiveness.
- The children form these words as graffiti art words and put them on the 'wonder wall'.
- Also, children could 'post' their own prayers on the prayer wall.

### Paper plate prayer...

A paper plate prayer offers a visual reminder that God provides; it is an opportunity for children to remember to give thanks to God.

You will need:

- Paper plates (2 per person)
- Split pins
- Selection of magazines showing food items (you can get these free from supermarkets)

Draw lines to divide both paper plates into quarters.

On one plate write a simple thank you prayer in each quarter e.g. for lunch, for favourite foods, for the people who grow/gather the food, prepare the food...

On the second plate, cut out one quarter, leaving a small section in the centre intact (you will need this for the split pin to fix both plates together).

Cut out pictures of food from the magazines and fix them to the second plate.

Fix the split pin through both plates putting the plate with pictures on the top.

Use the prayers in your worship times or before lunch times.

### **Prayer Box**

If you have worship in small groups e.g. in the classroom, this is a way to pray together.

With younger children:

Prepare a variety of different prayers on sheets of paper and invite children to choose one which they think is something they would like to use for their prayers. These could be drawn and/or written. Include prayers of thanks and praise as well as asking prayers.

With older children:

Explain how you are using the prayer box and that it is a safe place to put prayer ideas for people to talk to God. Let the children draw or write their prayer ideas on the prepared paper, fold them up and post them in the box. Sit in a circle, shake the box and then open the lid. Let each child choose to take out a folded piece of paper (some may not wish to participate - let them observe). Ask each to read out the prayer or describe what the picture shows.

Continue giving out posted prayers until they are all gone. (If some of the group are shy, say some prayer words that they can echo.)

### **Prayer Tree...**

You will need:

Strong vase or container

Sand

Bare branch/large twigs from a tree or shrub

Paper leaves

Hole punch

String/ribbon/wool

Preparing the tree:

Fill the container with sand and arrange the twigs or branch in the vase, creating a tree shape.

Preparing the leaves:

Prepare the leaf shapes, punch a hole at one end and thread through some string or wool. The children can write/draw their prayers on the leaves and hang them on the branches of the prayer tree.

## Prayer hands

Make a list of five people/places/events you want to remember in the prayers.

Ask the children to touch one of their fingers as you pray for each of the five things in your list. Sometimes the characteristic of the finger/thumb can add to the meaning of the prayer e.g. tall, short, strong, weak...

## Prayer in all things...

This is a prayer activity that looks at events in our lives from differing perspectives and is a reminder of the Christian belief that God is with us in all our experiences: happy or sad, difficult or easy, when we're alone or with others.

### You will need:

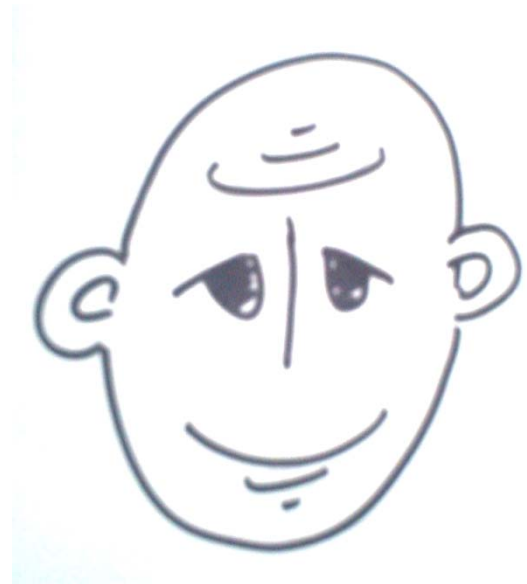
Make a large copy of this picture of a face. (One way up it looks happy, the other it looks sad.)

Hold it so that the face is showing the happy side.

- Invite the children to talk about happy things that have happened to them this day/week.
- Make a note of the things mentioned and use them in a responsive prayer.

**Leader:** Thank you for...

**Group:** We thank you for your goodness.



Turn the face upside down to reveal the sad face.

- Invite the children to tell you about sad things that have happened to them this day/week.
- Make a note of the things mentioned and use them in a responsive prayer.

**Leader:** We ask for help for...

**Group:** We ask you to help us.



# A suggested outline for a school's guidelines for collective worship

**Mission statement:** Identify the ways in which collective worship contributes to the fulfilment of your school's vision and mission.

**Aims for collective worship:** These might include:

In our Collective worship we aim to:

- reflect the teachings of Jesus
- affirm and strengthen Christian values
- celebrate all that is good in the school community
- offer comfort and support in difficult circumstances
- celebrate special times in the Christian calendar
- foster respect for each other and those in our community
- deepen spiritual awareness

It is important to make clear that worship in the school is Christian, but significant festivals from other world religions and secular events will be recognised and how this will be done.

You can also identify how collective worship will make a contribution to:

- **The children's experience of the Anglican tradition** e.g. special services held in the church, clergy coming into school to lead worship, the use of Anglican prayers, liturgy, songs, and the importance of the Bible.
- **Children's spiritual nurture:** e.g. the opportunities for prayer and reflection and how these are developed through the school day and in class settings.
- **The social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL):** e.g. the foundation offered by Christian worship for social and emotional learning in the school.
- **Spiritual, moral, Social and cultural education, (SMSC):** e.g. the opportunities to share experiences from other cultures and religions, to hear about charity projects and overseas links, to recognise the impact a faith can have on a person's life.

**The programme of themes:** This could include information about who is responsible for drawing up the themes for collective worship; showing how themes relate to the church year, bible teaching, the school year, celebrations, and so on. The current programme of themes could be appended to the document.

**Leadership and the weekly pattern of collective worship:** Indicate how the week is structured, the different groupings, where worship is held and any visitors who share in leading worship.

**Content:** Outline some of the variety of methods used to convey the theme e.g. music, role play, Bible stories, pictures, and the time allocated for worship.

**Monitoring and evaluation:** Explain how, by whom and how frequently the impact of collective worship on the whole school community is monitored. Refer to methods of evaluation: questionnaires to pupil groups, teachers, parents; peer observation and discussion of specific acts of worship and how this data informs the development of practice and is fed into judgements made in the school's SIAS self evaluation.

**Inclusion:** Explain that worship is planned and led so that all children have equal opportunity to take part and to benefit from that experience. Parents, however, do have the right to withdraw their child/children from collective worship.

A form of words about the parental right of withdrawal.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship as identified in the Education Act 1944 and in subsequent legislation. (Name of school) is a Church of England Voluntary Aided primary School where Christian values and principles underpin the whole curriculum and the experience of daily worship by the whole school community is an important part of school life. In order to preserve the distinctiveness of this church school community, we encourage everyone to be involved in the religious education and collective worship. Parents who have concerns about this should discuss them with the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher.

## Evaluation

Evaluation of worship is not easy, but it is vital in order to ensure worship is worthwhile. The Observation Record offered here is an example that can be used by heads, teachers or governors to monitor, regularly, acts of worship in your school. These can be used to feed into planning meetings with worship leaders, as can the children's comments (from interviews, records of children's comments e.g. in a collective worship book)

# Observation Record

Note: not every section will apply to each act of worship. The questions in each section are intended to be prompts.

Date..... Time..... Group/s present.....

Theme.....

## Gathering and beginning

How do the pupils enter and settle?

How are pupils encouraged to 'get ready' for the worship?

## Purpose and development

Is the purpose clear to everyone present?

Is the theme developed effectively?

Are artefacts, visual aids or different elements used in the presentation?

Are they of good quality?

## Spiritual dimension

Would this contribute to the spiritual dimension of individuals?

Are there opportunities for prayer/ reflection/quiet? How are they used?

## Integrity

Is there a sense of respect for the integrity of individuals?

Is there openness, or compulsion, in invitations to pray or sing?

Does the occasion engender ease or discomfort among participants?

## Atmosphere

Is there a sense of order on entering and leaving?

Is there a central focus?

Does the leader contribute to the atmosphere by attitude towards pupils, language, tone?

Is there a distinction between assembly and act of worship?

### **Sound, silence, visuals**

Is there a right balance of music, speech and silence?

How great a part does non verbal communication play?

Is any visual art used, or creative work by pupils shown and celebrated?

Are the words of songs or hymns appropriate for the pupils and the theme?

Is the use of live or recorded music appropriate?

### **Pupil involvement**

How wide is the age range?

Is the delivery appropriate for the age range, background, ability of pupils?

Are the pupils engaged and well motivated?

### **Staff**

Are teachers present (how many?) or is this seem as non contact time?

If present, what role do they play? Are they involved, or spectators?

### **Parents, Governors, visitors, clergy**

Are parents, governors or visitors present?

If so, what role do they play?

Are links with the local church referred to?

If a visitor leads the worship:

Is there evidence of adequate briefing?

Is the visitor properly introduced?

Is the visitor's contribution appropriate in content?

Does the visitor seem comfortable with the situation?

### **Close**

Has the timing been good?

Has the occasion clarified and affirmed the school's values?

Has it offered pupils and adults something to think about and take into the life of the school?

### **Additional points**

## Resources

### Websites

<http://www.culham.ac.uk/>

The most important on-line collective worship resource with ideas consisting of reflections for small groups and resources for larger groups. Includes multimedia: videos and powerpoints. Search the extensive archive by theme.

<http://www.assemblies.org.uk/>

<http://learn.christianaid.org.uk/>

Free collective worship resources

<http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/>

catalogue of resources for schools

[http://www.cafod.org.uk/resources/schools\\_teachers/school\\_assemblies](http://www.cafod.org.uk/resources/schools_teachers/school_assemblies)

<http://www.reep.org/cw/index.php>

Collective worship resources focused on environmental issues.

<http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/downloads>

resources available as PDF downloads

<http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools>

weekly collective worship based on the lectionary

<http://www.churchschoolseast.org.uk>

Look under resources for collective worship materials from the three East Anglian dioceses

### Publications

*Be Bold! Inspiring primary school collective worship* , Alison Seaman et al, Church House Publishing (0-7151-4004-3)

Ideas, inspiration, visual resources and training materials. Written with church schools in mind.

*Christian assemblies*, Jan Thompson, Teachingexpertise, (1-904677-07-X)

See <http://www.teachingexpertise.com/publications/christian-assemblies-58>

A number of ready-made acts of collective worship, each act of worship comes in a themed set of four.

*Christian assemblies for primary schools* (two volumes), Sharon Swain, SPCK, (0-281-04792-8)

Ready made acts of collective worship on Christian themes.

*A Teacher's Dozen*, published by Twelve Baskets, links with SEAL themes. For sample, go to [www.teachersdozen.co.uk](http://www.teachersdozen.co.uk)

Values for Life, Pause for Reflection, Pause to reflect on values, all from Jumping Fish Publications, Diocese of Gloucester, [www.gloucester.anglican.org/education/resources](http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/education/resources)

*Flippin' Praise: an interactive resource for transforming collective worship in schools*, CASIAS, (£11.00 with reductions for multiple copies) Contact: jane.sansom@ely.anglican.org Tel: 01353 652724

A resource intended to help children plan acts of worship. Comes as a flip book; flip the pages to mix and match creative worship within a clearly defined structure.

BRF's Barnabas produce a range of publications. See: [www.barnabasinschools.org.uk](http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk) or ring 01865 319700 and ask for their Collective Worship leaflet.

### Visual resources reflecting the world-wide Christian community

*The Christ We Share* pack and CD Rom, price £15 + 15% postage and packing and the A-cross the World pack, price £15 + £1.50 postage and packing is available from:

The Marketing Assistant, Church Mission Society, Partnership House, 157 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UU.

Tel: 020 7803 3376 Email: sales@cms-uk.org

*Born Among Us* resource pack, price £15 inc p and p is available from USPG, Partnership House, 157 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UU.

Tel: 020 7803 3413

Or order online from [www.uspg.org.uk](http://www.uspg.org.uk)

*Encounter Christianity* Series, Alan Brown and Alison Seaman, The National Society/Church House Publishing, 2001 - 2

### For teacher reference

*Common Worship, Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, Church House Publishing, 2000.

#### *The Shap Calendar of Religious Festivals*

A colourful wall chart for display, accompanied by a booklet of explanatory notes and an A5 laminated diary card for quick reference. Festivals, dates and information for twelve major world religions.

#### *The Shap Pictorial Calendar*

A4 size and offer a range of beautifully photographed images from around the world.

To purchase Shap publications, contact Mike Berry at the Shap Office, PO Box 38580, London SW1P 3XF.

Tel: 020 7898 1494 email: shap@natsoc.c-of-e.org.uk

For guidance on collective worship from The National Society go to [www.natsoc.org.uk](http://www.natsoc.org.uk)