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Diocese of Ely

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Worship in the Classroom— planning points to think about

Should every Primary School be offering class-based collective worship? There is no “yes or no answer” to this, it is entirely at the discretion of the school. The law simply states that every child is entitled to a daily act of collective worship, unless specifically withdrawn from this by their parents or guardians. This act of worship should take place in a normal school grouping i.e. whole school, key stage, class or paired classes. Some schools do not have any classroom based worship, feeling that it is important to bring the school together regularly to worship and that this is good way of building a strong school ethos. Other schools have one or two sessions of worship a week in class bases—this may be due to the logistics of moving children around the school site, timetabling, or a commitment to providing collective worship at an appropriate level for individual classes.

Staffing

- Teachers have the same right to withdraw from collective worship as do pupils and should not be placed in a position where they feel they are being forced to lead worship if they are unhappy to do so. It does not have to be the class teacher who leads collective worship in their classroom—this could be done by a TA, a regular visitor, or by a group of pupils.
- Those leading collective worship need to be aware of, and work within, the school policy—what are the aims of collective worship in the school? What is the school policy on prayer? What makes up a good act of collective worship? How long should an act of collective worship be?

Implementation

- Whatever the class based act of worship is called in individual classrooms, it should be given a name which denotes its special nature as a time set apart from the rest of the curriculum.
- Time should be set aside for class based worship in the timetable, and this should be adhered to. It is also helpful if a mechanism is found (such as placing a notice on the door) to ensure that other people respect your worship time and there are no unnecessary interruptions to spoil the atmosphere. Just as with the sessions of whole school worship, children *legally* cannot be withdrawn from a class based act of worship for extra reading etc.
- Classroom based worship is still part of the school's overall provision of collective worship—like the main acts of worship it should be regularly evaluated and a record of worship kept. *It is very easy for this to “slip” in a busy classroom, what steps can*

you take to make sure this is not the case?

- Remember that in a church school the foundation governors have a special responsibility for evaluating your collective worship provision—so they should be invited to join you in the classroom on occasions if you have a regular programme of class based worship!

Content

The rest of the booklet unpacks different approaches to collective worship, but some broad principles need to be agreed when thinking about the themes for class based worship:

- Is the content being planned in order to develop further the school's theme for the week? If this is the case where in the week does the class based worship fall and how does this affect what you do? Are all classes doing the same thing, but obviously at a level and in a manner best suited to the age and the ability of their children?
- Is the content of the worship tied to the curriculum of the individual class? This can be a way of making worship more real by relating it to the present interests of the children—*the leader does need to be absolutely certain here that they are offering a worship experience and not an extra injection of curriculum!*
- Alternatively, the class might follow its own worship theme which is not immediately related to either of the above but follows its own distinctive track—a term's worth of focussing on hearing parable stories for example.

Advantages of Classroom Worship for Pupils

- Collective worship can be organised at a time of day which best suits the needs of the group
- No time is lost in the timetable in travelling around school or waiting for other classes
- The worship will be developed in a way appropriate to their age and abilities
- The atmosphere can be more personal and sensitive to pupils' needs
- Time can more easily be spent on quiet reflection with less distractions
- Pupils will be more confident about sharing personal experiences and asking questions when the "audience" is smaller.

Collective Worship "on the run"!

There are times in the school calendar when teachers will be wondering about holding a class based act of worship simply because their class is unable to join the rest of the school

that day—it may be that they are going swimming, or are out on a school trip for example. At this point the question is sure to arise “do we have to....?” The answer is “yes” - the law states that every child is *entitled* to a *daily* act of collective worship, and this needs to be honoured.

Some scenarios:

If the class has been out of school for **part of a day**—as in the case with swimming lessons— a classroom based act of worship can take place at any other time of the day. Here you might be able to ask the main school worship leader for the outline of their assembly to ensure that the class has a similar experience to the one they missed. Is it even possible that the regular worship leader could join you for this?

On a school **residential trip**, the same law on collective worship still applies—here it is important to work this daily act of collective worship into your programme, and an allocated time of recollection, reflection, and giving thanks at the end of the day might also go some way to calming “sleepover excitement”!

Day trips are the most difficult situations to cope with when talking about daily entitlement to worship, as it is often the case that the trip really does take up the whole day with no time to pause and take stock! There may be opportunities in the day to undertake a stilling exercise or similar—when on a visit to a place of worship, or in a quiet natural setting, for example. A short time of prayer before and / or after the journey might also be possible. Why not create your own school “travel prayer” or select something such as one of the Celtic blessings to use on these occasions? See **Appendix One**.

Is a prayer at the end of the day “enough”?

Many church schools have the helpful practice of saying grace at mealtimes (either in the classroom or in the dining hall) and prayers at the end of the school day. Sometimes the question is then asked is this prayer sufficient to count as the daily act of worship. Probably the questioner already knows the answer— whilst it is very good practice to make these additional types of prayer part of your daily routine, they do not in themselves constitute a full act of collective worship. The rest of this booklet demonstrates how any effective act of collective worship has in essence four component parts, so a short prayer which addresses just one of these areas is not a complete act of collective worship in its true sense.

The Classroom as a Worship Space

Collective worship in a classroom has a different feel from worship in the assembly hall—a difference which has both advantages and disadvantages for the worship leader and for participants.

Advantages:

- The more intimate nature of the worship can make everyone feel more readily included—there is nobody on the far edge or at the remote back
- The worship can be planned to be more appropriate for the age and understanding of the children present than is possible in a large mixed age gathering
- Children and adults may feel happier at leading worship in a more familiar setting with their peers rather than in front of the whole school

Disadvantages:

- Worship in the teaching space may feel like it is another lesson
- Over-running lessons can squeeze worship time if teachers allow this to happen

Think Room Layout

How can the classroom become a “sacred space” for collective worship?

Can your collective worship time be “special” or different from the lesson which preceded it if the pupils just stay sitting in their places? Possibly—but it is more difficult to achieve this! It may take a little time to prepare a room for worship, but this in itself signals “special occasion”, and obviously children can be given the responsibility of preparing the space.

Do not leave children seated at their desks for worship, *especially* if this means that they are not all facing the same way or facing the “action”.

With younger children who normally sit on the carpet, think about how cramped the space is, and whether they are knocking against each other. What are they looking at (your feet?) and how comfortable are they? Are they relaxed?

Consider worshipping sitting in a **circle** with a focus at the centre of the circle. This could be a group sitting on the floor, or a circle of chairs. It is important that everyone is at the same level and if at all possible there is no double circle or crowded feel. The circle is a powerful tool for learning and for inclusion (think circle time, or sessions of “philosophy for children”) and will add to the sense of occasion, emphasising that all in the circle are invited to participate on an equal footing—you are on a worship journey together.

There may be occasions when you wish to use the interactive whiteboard in the worship—the same rules about comfort and lessening distractions still apply, although this time you

may be sitting in a block rather than a circle.

Think Worship Focus

In all places of worship there is what may be termed a worship focus—for example, in a church worshippers face East and the altar, or in a mosque the qiblah wall clearly indicates the direction of Mecca. In your assembly hall you probably also have a worship focus—it may be a table with special cloths and a cross, or a particular display board which reflects the theme of the worship. Many schools like to use a candle as a focus during worship, and this has the added advantage that lighting and blowing out the candle effectively signals the beginning and end of worship. An attractive worship focus also gives those who do not wish to worship something to look at while they think their own thoughts!



What would be an appropriate worship focus in your room? A special candle and stand? Floating candles in a glass dish? A Christian artefact of some kind? (It doesn't always have to be a cross that you use—as long as the children know why you have chosen what you have done.) Would the children like to make a cross for use in their worship? Different ones can be used at different times (see the two pupil made examples here).

You may like to change the focus regularly depending on the themes of your acts of worship—if you are telling a story such as the Feeding of the Five Thousand then literally use your loaf—if you are using the parable of the Lost Sheep then a toy sheep...



You could think of adding a changing natural focus related to the season to your display—catkins, pine cones, a vase of flowers.... something beautiful, or curious is especially appropriate and could help direct your prayers to thanks for the wonders of creation.

One thing to remember is the height of your focus display—if the children are sitting on the floor in a circle then it needs to be something on the ground or a very low table (coffee table) and to be equally attractive through 360 degrees.

There are also times when your interactive whiteboard can be used as the worship focus but pick carefully about what you wish to use and why—for example would you want to use a photograph of a cross when a real cross

would be more immediate? Probably not, but you might like to use an awe-inspiring photograph such as one taken by the Hubble Space Telescope...

Think Reflective Displays

What happens to the items from your worship focus when they are not in use? If the answer is dumped in a box, or packed out of the way on top of a bookcase—think again!

A small reflective display set up attractively can remind children of the theme of your worship and help them to think more about it at different times of the day—make it interactive and encourage them to leave their



comments there! This display may be in a particular corner of the room which you face during worship time or—as in the photograph above—be the place where you “store” your worship artefacts.



Do you have a small display board or corner in your room that you can set up as a “space for reflection”? Again this can be linked to the theme of your collective worship. This helps to emphasise that the message of classroom worship is not simply something of the moment, but continues to be relevant throughout the school day.

Why not plan to use your reflection board to link with the season's of the Church's Year? You could create a liturgical clock with a pointer to be moved on each week..... Or you could use backing paper to match the Church's colours (purple or white / gold or red or green as appropriate)..... or use symbols and fine art prints to refer to the great stories that relate to each season. (See the back of this booklet and **Appendix Two** for some more suggestions about reflection corners and their use in worship)



Our Prayer Corner is a special place at school where you can go to pray or just sit and think quietly. We have chosen things to help you feel close to God like children's bibles and prayer books. There is also a small cross to hold and a happy box to share your happy thoughts or news. Class 2 pupils have written prayers and attached them to the prayer pole. There is also a candle to remind Christians that Jesus is 'the light of the world'.





Gathering

An act of collective worship, indeed any act of worship, is composed of four key parts—**gathering—engaging—responding—sending**— and each of these needs thinking about whether you are worshipping together as a school or together as a class.

“Gathering” looks at how you open worship and how you “set the mood” for what is to follow. When you gather together as a school you probably already have systems in place to encourage the children to enter the worship area quietly, respectfully and expectantly—how can the same effect be encouraged in the classroom?

Think Timing

You may not be able to determine when in the school day your class’ worship takes place, but if you *are* able to affect this, then think carefully about the optimum time for your class, for example:

- If the worship takes place before a break in the day it is likely to get “squashed” as lessons run over and the children are more likely to be thinking about the break than about the worship
- Worship which comes after a break in the day can have a calming effect in the session which follows it. The room can be made ready before the break. Children can be assembled outside the classroom and encouraged to enter quietly and form their worship circle, even better, they can be *invited* or *welcomed* into the worship space. If the worship begins the afternoon, can you leave formalities such as the register until after the worship has ended? Some voices may be saying “my class isn’t capable of that” - but you don’t know for sure until you try!
- Alternatively—should worship end the school day? In this position worship sums up and completes the experiences of the day, and there is the possibility that some parents may like to join you—as long as they *join* the worship, not regard it as a spectator sport!

Think Senses

Probably when you enter your assembly hall for collective worship there is quiet **music** playing to focus people as they come in and help them prepare themselves mentally. The same thing can be done in the classroom to enhance the worshipping atmosphere. An alternative to this is to choose a special class worship **song** (short and quiet is better than

bright and bouncy!) and to begin each act of worship quietly singing this together.

You can also learn from the practice in churches or the sacred places of other faiths—some churches, for example, use a bell to signify that worship is about to begin, so why not do the same, or use something such as a **rainstick, a bell, chime bars, tank drum or a singing bowl** to gently draw attention to the beginning of worship? The same item could also be used to close the worship.

What about the sense of smell? Incense is popular in worship with its symbolism of prayers rising to God, coupled with a beautiful smell which is an honouring of God. You may like to experiment with using **incense sticks or a scented candle** at times of prayer and worship (as long as children know why it is being used and it is not just a gimmick). This would be especially appropriate at festival times.

For sight, there is of course the traditional **candle** and lighting this can be part of your gathering ritual. Alternatively you could run a **power point of images** accompanied by music as a regular introduction to worship—just remember that you need only one main visual focus at one time, as to have too many can detract from the effect.

Think Greeting

Your whole school acts of collective worship begin with a greeting that signals the worship is beginning. This may be a simple good morning and response, or you could be using a liturgical greeting with its response, such as “Peace be with you” or “Jesus the light of the world is here”. If you are using the book **“Flippin’Praise”** with its selection of greetings and responses, then this is the time to get it out!

A greeting makes those present feel wanted and is an opportunity to gel as a class. You could evolve your own class greeting and response or use whatever is normally said in the whole school act of collective worship. Alternatively, if you are sitting in a worship circle you can pass the greeting or pass the peace around the circle. This can be done the same way as in circle time e.g. with each child greeting their neighbour by name with an expression such as: “Hello James, we hope you enjoy our worship”. The youngest children could pass a toy around the circle with each one saying “hello and welcome” to the rest of the class. Make sure everyone present is included in the greeting—including all the adults! Passing the peace is a simple handshake and the greeting and response “Peace be with you” “And also with you”.

Whichever form of greeting is used it is important to remember that it does not always have to be the adults in the class who offer or begin the greeting—other class members can do this perfectly well (and will enjoy the responsibility).

Engaging



“Engaging” is often the bulk of any act of collective worship as it is the point at which the main message is shared—in class based worship this might be a story slot or even a discussion of a moral issue. An important question to ask at this point is: “Has the theme of the class based act of worship got to follow the whole school weekly theme, or am I setting my own themes?”

Think Story

The Bible is full of wonderful stories so one way forward could be to use class based acts of collective worship to re-tell some of the great Biblical stories—either by selecting a run of shorter stories such as the parables of Jesus, or by telling a great Bible epic over several sessions such as the story of Joseph. This can be done in a variety of ways, but in the intimate setting of the classroom it is probably best to avoid drama as this will probably upset the atmosphere you are trying to create—drama in a small setting is actually much harder to carry off well than in a larger one!

With younger children, in particular, you might like to use a **storysack** approach and create some sets of materials using Bible story books which can be shared around several classrooms. The parables of Jesus would be very appropriate material for this. You may already have story sacks relating to secular stories which could be used in the worship context—here the important thing to do would be to use stories which can stimulate discussion on a spiritual or moral issue. How can this be worship you may ask—and the answer would lie in the message you drew from the story and the response it evokes.

You may already be familiar with **Godly Play** which is a method of telling Bible stories using carved wooden pieces in a slow and reflective way. The stories are opened up with wondering questions and children invited to respond as they feel moved. This particular style of storytelling suits the more intimate nature of classroom based worship—although teachers need to know that, properly done, it is a style of storytelling which cannot be hurried so your worship might last longer than when using other story telling methods! Interested in learning more? Story kits and scripts can be borrowed from the Diocesan Office.

You may also like to think about using a **video** in worship—not a long episode of course, but a short burst of part of a story which will stimulate reflection. There are various religious videos / DVDS which can be used—part of “Miraclemaker” for example, but there is nothing wrong with using a snatch of a popular secular film to illustrate a particular virtue or value such as true friendship or helping the weak etc etc. It is the context in which the film is used, and the way in which the message is drawn out, which turns the occasion from “watching a film” to worship.

You are never too old for a story! Older pupils can also enjoy a story in collective worship, but, according to their ability, can be stretched to think about and discuss the message of the story, and the relationship of that message to their own thinking and experiences. Here too the difference between worship and a moral debate depends on how those other three elements of the act of worship (gathering—responding—sending) relate to the chosen story.

It is worth remembering that there will be times when simply telling a story and letting it sink in is enough (after all that is what Jesus did when telling parable stories!), and times when wondering, questioning, even debate are appropriate. Not every act of worship will follow the same pattern—think about the effect you are trying to have with any particular approach.

Think Reflection

Often in collective worship when people see the word “reflection” they think of it as something which can be used as an alternative to prayer—i.e. a quiet moment thinking about whatever the preceding message has been. In this section, however, we are thinking how a reflective **stilling or creative visualisation** activity could be the main focus of an act of worship.

Sometimes people are worried by, or suspicious of, this type of worship because it feels unusual or it makes them uncomfortable to sit for too long with their eyes closed (they may just need reassurance this isn't a trick and everyone else is secretly laughing at them!). As with any act of worship, there is the option not to take an active part in what is going on and just sit quietly.

For a session of reflection of this kind it is important that participants sit in a comfortable yet relaxed position and focus on their breathing for a moment. The best position to adopt is sitting on a chair, both feet flat on the floor, hands relaxed on the lap and eyes closed. The worship leader talks the group through a slow breathing in and out—an introduction such as this can be used:

*Breathe in love
Breathe out hate*

*Breathe in joy
Breathe out worries*

*Breathe in peace
Breathe out stress*

*Breathe in patience
Breathe out impatience*

This “breathing prayer” can be changed or lengthened to include appropriate qualities.

Once the class is prepared the central moment of reflection can take a number of different forms. It can, for example, be the creative visualisation of a story, giving children the time to re-tell a story in “the television in their head”. Alternatively it could be an opportunity to use some natural object as a focus for thinking about a Christian teaching or value. You

can see some worked examples of these styles of storytelling in **Appendix Two**.

If your class collective worship falls at the end of the day or towards the end of the week your reflective engagement could take the form of a **review of the day or the week** which could be organised as follows:

Begin with the stilling prayer (above) . Possibly with quiet music playing, invite the children to think quietly about 2 or 3 (or 4 or 5) things that have happened that day or week which they may want to thank God for (or are thankful for) - you may like to give the class time to sketch these memories with crayons (the crayons being an attempt to stop older children spending undue time on artwork rather than reflection). Then ask the children to reflect on something which has happened which they would like to change. Invite them to talk to God about it if they wish, or simply to think through how they will deal with the situation if it arises again. When the time feels right, the leader concludes the reflecting time with a prayer. There is no need for children to share their sketches or their thoughts as part of this act of worship—it is personal time, not plenary!

The same pattern of **reviewing the weekend** can be used if your class worship falls at the beginning of the week e.g. *light the worship candle, go around the circle giving everyone the opportunity to speak of one good thing or one bad thing which happened over the weekend. Spend some quiet time reflecting on what you have heard. Share the Lord's Prayer together and then blow out the worship candle.*

Please note that most people enjoy stilling activities and value them, but if the teacher or worship leader finds this style of worship awkward or worrying then it will not work. The reason for this is that their feelings will almost certainly show in their voice, and the children will quickly pick up on this.

Another form of reflection which would be appropriate in the classroom is to play a powerpoint of **natural images** or natural history film to music whilst giving children the chance to engage (awe and wonder!) with some of the amazing aspects of creation. This could be linked with the telling of the creation story or the words of a psalm or hymn. When reflecting in this way there is no need to feel obliged to dissect the images afterward—just enjoy and absorb!

You may already use the lighting and blowing out of a worship candle in assemblies—The use of candles in worship has a long history. Both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions have always made use of candles in their liturgies, whereas the Protestant Church has tended to rely less on candles as a visual aid in worship, reserving their use for the altar table or for special festivals such as Easter. In recent years candles have become more common, as part of an Advent Crown, as night-lights for prayers or in candle-lit services. However, Christians of all traditions and today many others in our society increasingly welcome the beauty and stillness that a candle's light can generate.

If you would like to use the candle itself as a focus for reflection at the heart of your classroom worship then you might like to start with the **candle prayers** on the Barnabas website <http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/candle-prayers-for-reflection/>

There are certain times of the year—especially autumn and spring—when a reflective exercise based on the **natural world** may feel very appropriate, here are a couple of possibilities:

- Have a collection of stones—enough for one each. Share the stones out and spend time getting to know your own stone, looking at the texture, shape, colour etc. Think about what your stone has gone through—how it has been weathered and worn—realise that no two stones are identical, although they may seem similar. In the Bible (I Peter chp 2 vss 4ff) it talks about Christians as living stones, built into the Church (as a “spiritual temple”). Think about how you are like your stone, and how all the experiences in your life have knocked you into shape, and will continue to do so. Think about how many different “buildings” your stone will be built into (family, school, work, perhaps church). Come forward in turn to build a small cairn of stones to symbolise how you all come together as a class family and support each other.
- Each have a leaf (from the same tree). Look at your leaf and explore it (texture, smell, colour, shape). Compare your leaf with your neighbours’ - can you see differences? If you put them side by side are you able to pick out your own leaf again? Link this to the teaching of Jesus about how God knows and loves each one of us as unique human beings—even able to tell the difference between the hairs on our heads! (Matthew chp 10 vs 30). Reflect on how you like to be known and treated as an individual, and consider whether you actually do this for other people or whether you stereotype them. *This style of reflection can be undertaken with a variety of natural objects—snowflakes would be ideal if we could only capture them!*

Think symbolic actions

Worship is full of symbolic actions—the breaking of bread in the Eucharist, the pouring of water over a baby’s head in baptism—we have already suggested using the passing of the peace in the greetings section of this booklet.

There are some symbolic actions from church services which could be transferred into classroom collective worship. One of these is a part of **Ash Wednesday** services where worshippers place a piece of paper (sometimes with writing on it, sometimes not) in a bowl. These papers represent the things for which the people are sorry and they are symbolically destroyed by being set fire to on the altar. Why not do something similar when planning worship for Lent (be careful with those matches!)

In Germany at **Epiphany** they “chalk the doors” as a special blessing on a home. The chalking consists of three letters C, M and B which are placed between the two halves of the date e.g. 20CMB10. Traditionally the three wise men of the standard nativity story are called Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, so the letters can be for them. They are also the first letters of a prayer in Latin “Christus Mansionem Benedicat” which means “May Christ bless this house”. Why not chalk the doorframe of your classroom as part of an Epiphany act of class based worship? (After telling the Epiphany story of course!)

Sharing of food is important in worshipping communities—think of the kara prasad of the Sikhs and Hindus for example— or the Jewish celebrations which centre on symbolic meals such as Passover. In Christianity it is the Eucharist or Holy Communion which is the central form of worship, and although one would certainly not stage a classroom Eucharist, a sharing of food based on a story of friendship or remembering would be a possible basis of an act of collective worship. You could use a Bible story or one of your class reading books to help you think about the type of things you do together as a family, as friends, as a class, and mark this by a simple sharing in which you serve each other.

Think Values

Collective worship is one of the key points in the school day when the ethos of the school community is established and reinforced. It may be that the school is already focusing on Christian Values as a key theme in collective worship (e.g. using the excellent values pack from Jumping Fish <http://gloucester.anglican.org/schools/jumping-fish-publications/>) A Values based theme is a very suitable one for classroom worship as it not only reinforces the rules of the classroom, but it also allows teachers to select those values which particularly resonate with the current needs or issues of their class.. and do reinforce these with a permanent reminder on the worship focus board.

See Appendix Three for some suggestions of worship themes based on the Church Year



Responding



The Responding element of collective worship relates directly to the Engagement which precedes it—it should be a response to the story, the reflection etc, and so the connection between them should be clear. In collective worship the responding normally takes the form of singing and / or praying / reflecting.

In classroom based collective worship whether or not you decide to use a hymn or a chorus as a response will probably depend more on the musical ability / confidence of the teacher than anything else. You may like to sing to a CD if this is easier. Do not feel *obliged* to include singing in your class based worship!

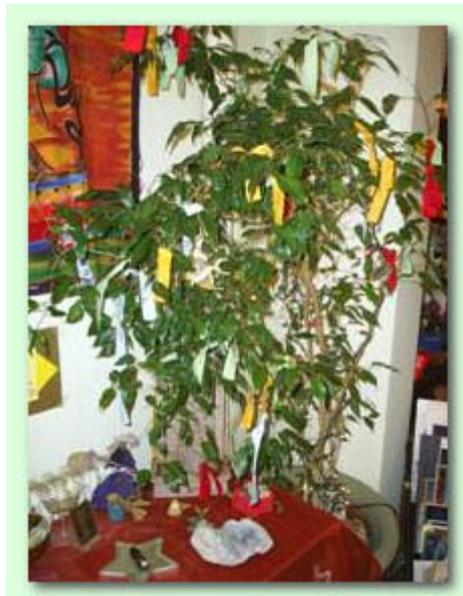
This section will look chiefly at prayer.

Think Children's Prayers

Extempore prayer is when people are invited to pray freely in a worship gathering about what is on their hearts at that time. In the more intimate surroundings of a class based act of worship, children may feel free to contribute to worship in this way if *invited* (not coerced) into doing so. It is important that such prayers are valued and accepted by the rest of the group and that children are not made to feel strange or awkward by praying aloud in this way. Try it—you could be surprised!

Children may like to prepare prayers to use in worship, or suggest themes that are appropriate. You can use the same devices in the classroom as you would do in the main assembly hall to collect together these prayers and themes e.g:

- **The Prayer Tree**, whether a real plant or a display, is a perennial classroom favourite where children can add prayer requests on suitable tags or post-its. If you have classroom based worship on a regular basis, such as once a week, then this is a useful device for making sure that the worship regularly focuses on the needs and concerns of the children. You do not have to use a tree of course—any other design, even a post-it board, can work equally well.
- Sometimes children like to write their own prayers to be used in worship. Why not



have a **book** they can use? Make sure the book looks beautiful, not tatty, and also be sure to use it regularly, so that they are encouraged to contribute to it.

- A large set of **beads** can be used by the worship leader to encourage children to suggest topics for prayer during an act of worship—as topics are suggested, count them out on the beads and invite the children to concentrate on the bead / theme important to them as a summing up prayer is prayed. If children are happy with extempore prayer then the beads could be passed around the circle for those who wished to do so to pray their individual prayers aloud.
- Ask the children to think of as many different ways in which they can make shapes with meaning using their **hands** e.g. which shapes go best with: saying sorry; saying thank you; saying I love you; saying that you really are worried ; asking for help; showing joy or maybe sadness etc. As a class, decide on four or five hand-shapes that everyone thinks are the most useful for praying and then end the session with a time of silent 'hand-praying', with eyes open; use the different hand movements to show 'out loud' what in fact is being said in their hearts.
- **Pebble prayers.** Have available a bowl of pebbles or glass nuggets for the class - when children have something special they wish to pray for in worship they pick up a pebble before they join the worship circle. There is a time of quiet reflection during which children may think or pray quietly about their special topic and their thoughts are brought together in an all encompassing prayer by the worship leader. The prayer pebbles are returned respectfully to the prayer bowl. The time of quiet reflection could be marked by a large egg-timer.

Think Class Prayer or a Traditional Prayer

Just as you may have a school prayer, it is possible to have a **class prayer** that you can use regularly in your class based worship. This may be one that you like from a book of prayers which has been written at an appropriate level for your children to remember and understand. Alternatively, it is possible to write a class prayer together which is special and particular to you—this could also be a part of your worship display

OUR CLASS PRAYER

Dear Father God

Thank you for the school we have and all the things we learn. Thank you for all our class teachers who work hard all day to help us.

Thank you for all our friends and help us to look after each other.

Thank for the other adults who keep our school running smoothly and looking wonderful.

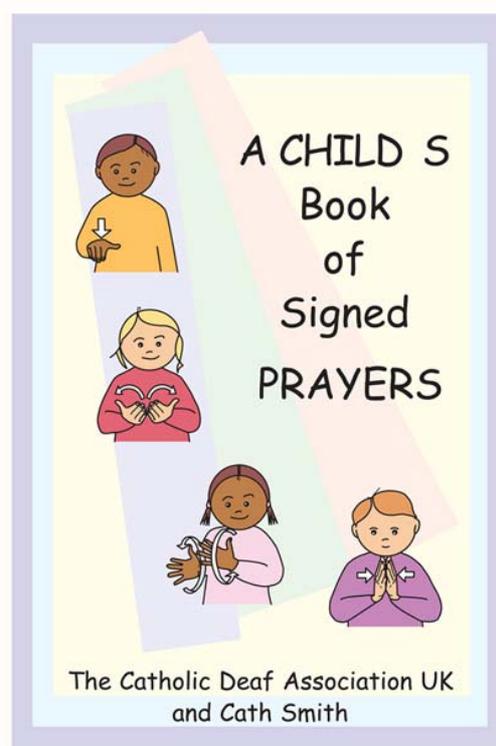
Help us remember how lucky we are to have such a wonderful school.

In Jesus name

Amen

There are many **traditional prayers**, including obviously, the Lord's Prayer, which you can adopt as your special class prayer.

You may like to use something special such as a **signed prayer**, or one with actions.



Available through Amazon



Sending

“Sending” is the completion of the worship. When your worship in the assembly hall comes to a conclusion there is literally a “sending”, as people exit and go back to their classrooms—how can you follow the same pattern in the classroom if you are not actually leaving the room?

Answers to this question may depend on what you have decided to do under “gathering”, and could therefore include any or all of the following:

- Extinguishing the worship candle—perhaps accompanied by a special “candle prayer”
- A closing sentence and response
- Passing the peace
- A version of the blessing
- A quiet reflective song
- Listening to some music
- Respectfully (symbolically) placing the worship artefacts in their display position

Then encourage the children to return the room to normal—quietly!



Here children at the Cathedral Days join Bishop David in the blessing. They stand with arms upraised to bless each other, then turn and face outwards, palms forward, to bless and pray for the world. You can do the same in the classroom—face north to pray for the rest of the UK; face west to pray for your local community (unless another direction seems more logical); face east for Europe; face south for the developing world.

Appendix one—Prayers for School Journeys

It is always difficult to know what to do about the daily act of collective worship when your class is spending the whole day out on a trip and it is likely that you will have only minutes in the classroom itself. On such occasions it may be possible to use a simple travelling prayer to begin the day before you set out, and perhaps a thank you prayer at the end of the day. On other occasions worship will more naturally occur during the trip itself e.g. if attending one of the October Schools Cathedral Days.

What prayers would you use? You may wish to write one of your own as a class, but some of those available on the web include:

**For each step that I might take
Be my guide, O Lord of life
For each load that I might bear
Be my strength, O Lord of life
For each mountain I might face
Be my power, O Lord of life
For each river that might
impede
Be my safety, O Lord of life
For each place where I might
rest
Be my peace, O Lord of life
For each sunrise and sunset
Be my joy, O Lord of life**

A collection of journey prayers inspired by Celtic Christianity is at http://www.faithandworship.com/prayer_journey.htm including this one..

The Irish monks of the Celtic Church were tremendous travellers, many spending their whole lives on the move—one of the most famous of these was St Brendan the Voyager (487-577) You can find his story at <http://www.irelandseye.com/irish/people/saints/brendan.shtm>

**God, bless to me this day,
God bless to me this night;
Bless, O bless, Thou God of grace,
Each day and hour of my life;
 Bless, O bless, Thou God of grace,
 Each day and hour of my life.**

**God, bless the pathway on which I go;
God, bless the earth that is beneath my
sole;
Bless, O God, and give to me Thy love,
O God of gods, bless my rest and my
repose;
 Bless, O God, and give to me Thy
love,**

—perhaps this would also be useful for an act of collective worship centred on the prayer:

May it be your will Eternal One, our God and the God of our ancestors,
that You lead us toward peace, emplace our footsteps towards peace,
guide us toward peace, and make us reach our desired destination for life, gladness, and peace.
May You rescue us from the hand of every foe, ambush, bandits and wild animals along the
way,
and from all manner of punishments that assemble to come to Earth. May You send blessing in
our every handiwork, and grant us peace, kindness, and mercy in your eyes and in the eyes of
all
who see us. May You hear the sound of our supplication, because You are the God who hears
prayer and supplications. Blessed are You, Eternal One, who hears prayer.

God, my Sovereign, I commend my path to you.
Wherever I wander, wherever I am,
I am under the umbrella of your protection –
Whether I am in my own secure, familiar surroundings,
Or in a strange and foreign port,
I do not lose heart and I do not fear,
For I trust in you.

You who protect the tiny birds in their migration
And guide them across an unknown sea
From one hemisphere to another,
May you also take me – childlike,
With my pleading heart and longing eye –
Graciously into your merciful charge.
May your love smooth my way,
May you guard me from evil and deceit,
May you mercifully guide me to my destination,
And may you stand by me
To help me accomplish my purpose,
For the fulfilment and manifestation
Of my plans and endeavours.
Yet, All-benevolent One, it is not for myself alone
That I lift my hands toward you.
In my fervent prayer
I also entrust to your divine care
All of my household: my loved ones
And those close to me who remain behind.
May you guard them and protect them
With your parental grace.
May you turn all harm and dire events,
All fear and danger, away from them –
So we may see one another again
In joy and in good fortune. Amen

Appendix two—creative visualisations

Creative visualisation is a way of using the imagination to walk through a story in your head. In a guided visualisation in collective worship (or RE) the worship leader takes the group through a story sequence which is narrated in the second person and the present tense. The worshipper is given an “active” role in the story—but as a bystander to the action, rather than as a key character (e.g. as “crowd” rather than as Jesus).

The worshippers need to be still (literally stilling—not just refraining from movement) to have the opportunity to internalise the story properly. Their focus goes inward to the “television in their head” and they engage in making sense of the story for themselves. Although the worship involves the giving of the broad outline of a story, each participant populates the story in their own way, and no two stories will be identical. It is important that, should you discuss the stories afterwards, each individual's interpretation is accepted and welcomed—you do not rubbish a child's imagination!

Depending on the context, the class may be given some of the story beforehand..... enough background information to put the story into context.... or no introduction at all! If using a Bible story, then the pupils' knowledge of other similar stories will help them provide the context. Just as one uses contemporary secular stories in worship, creative visualisations can be created in the same way. One important tip is that whichever kind of story you are using, if you are turning it into a visualisation it is ALWAYS advisable for the leader to write the script out in advance, including the planned pauses, or you will rush and / or forget what you are doing.

Below are two well known stories turned into visualisations to give examples of how this can be done. Remember that each story should be preceded by a preparatory stilling activity as described on page 12. At the end they should be brought out gradually by being asked to concentrate on their breathing and eventually open their eyes.

A secular story—the Starfish

You are standing on the beach, look around you,,,,,what do you see.....what do you smell.....what do you hear?

Look down at the beach... last night there was a big storm and lots of different things were washed up on the beach... take some time to see what you can find.....

There are other people on the beach now... if you look you will see a girl your age and her granddad walking along... go closer and find out what they are talking about.....

You realise the girl is picking up starfish which have been stranded on the beach and

putting them back into the sea.... Her granddad seems to be telling her off for doing this, find out what is he saying to her....

The girl looks up at her granddad... you hear her say "I know I cannot help all the starfish granddad, but I want to save as many as I can..... She carries on putting the starfish into the sea....

What do you do next?..... Do you want to join her and help the starfish too?....Do you want to carry on with your walk? Do you want to say something to the girl or her granddad?Do what you think right and best....

Once the stilling is over pupils can, if they wish, share what they decided to do—this may be done with talking partners.

A Bible Story—Palm Sunday

You are in Bible times....It is hot and dusty.. you can see a crowd coming along the road and hear happy shouting... get closer and find out what is happening..

You see people rushing to tear branches off the palm trees.. They are using them like flags and waving them wildly... do you want to collect a branch too?

How are you feeling now? Are you curious? Are you worried? Are you frightened? Are you happy?

You watch as people start to take off their cloaks and put them on the ground... it looks like a rainbow in the dirt....who do you think will walk along that path... can you see anyone coming yet?....

You see someone riding a donkey along the rainbow path..... The crowd are shouting "Hosanna! Praise God!"..... See if you can find someone who will tell you who this special person is.....

At last you know it is Jesus of Nazareth who is coming.... Try to remember some of the stories you have heard about him and the miracles he has done or the stories he has told....

Jesus comes level with you... he looks in your direction and smiles... you feel he is smiling at you... how do you feel?.... What do you want to do?....

The moment is over and Jesus has moved on... what are you going to do next... will you keep following him....will you go home now? Do whatever you think best...

Appendix three—using reflective displays

If you are going to set up a reflective display or a quiet corner you need to first decide whether or not it will be directly related to the theme of your classroom worship provision and, indeed, whether you actually intend to use it during worship, as this will affect both the position and the contents of the display. Alternatively, you may be thinking of a display which is simply *there*—something children can be encouraged to interact with in their own time—such displays need not relate to the collective worship directly, but can be created using different criteria.

Some questions to ask when preparing a reflective display include:

- What words should I use? Often this is an occasion when less is more, and it is often most helpful to pose questions rather than make statements.
- How can I make it interactive with things it is safe / appropriate to handle?
- Do I want to create opportunities for children to respond to the display by (a) adding something to it and / or (b) leaving their comments?
- How and when will children be able to relate to the display, and is this likely to include their being left in a classroom unsupervised? It is important that children have time to think and reflect, and have some privacy in doing so if this is outside of collective worship.

The effective presentation of reflective displays is important, and it is worth remembering that a simple drape will provide texture and colour to a display, as well as bringing objects together and giving an overall sense of unity of purpose. Also, simple is usually better than cluttered—when creating a display think of the spaces between as well as what you are putting up!

The examples below include both a suggestion for a display and a pointer as to how it could be used in classroom collective worship, but the displays could be equally good as stand alone reflective corners.

Creation	
<p>You need: photographs of beautiful natural scenes / space / animals etc; natural items such as pebbles and leaves; a sign “What do you love about our natural world?”; a retelling of the creation story or an open Bible story book.</p> <p>Interactive: a way of leaving a record of you answer e.g. post –its, drawing paper, modelling clay</p>	<p>Talk about things you have enjoyed making and how you felt about them. Share the Biblical Creation story and how the things God created are described as “good”.</p> <p>Younger children could share ideas of what is special to them from the natural world, whilst older pupils might wish to share their feelings on eco issues.</p> <p>Pray about how to take care of the good world.</p>

Labyrinths

There has been a resurgence in the construction of labyrinths as a an aid to prayer—they represent a way of walking a reflective spiritual journey. (*note—labyrinths and mazes are not identical—there is only one route through a labyrinth, however twisting it might be*)

You need: photographs of labyrinths are readily available - *look particularly for the Ely Cathedral West Tower "Maze" and the grass labyrinth in the Norwich Cathedral cloisters.* Question: "Where are you going in your life?" If you have a flat surface, create a labyrinth outlined with e.g. seeds which pupils can really use.

Interactive: materials to draw finger labyrinths from "seed", *see the following pages.*

Play quiet music and spend time drawing your own finger labyrinths. (*Note—creating a labyrinth is actually part of the preparation for the journey—giving out pre-printed examples is not so effective BUT with younger children this pre-preparation is necessary.*)

"Walk" the labyrinths together by tracing the route with a finger. Do this in a reflective manner with the worship leader inviting participants to pause and reflect on key moments of their lives by asking questions such as: "Who are the people who are special to you?" "What are your hopes for the future?" (Questions as appropriate for the class.)

Pray to give God thanks for all those who support you through your life journeys, and a thank you that He is with you through all life's ups and downs.

The True Vine

You need: photographs of trees, especially vines; an outline on the board of a vine stem, and a basket containing grape outlines to be drawn on; notices "Jesus said I am the true vine..stay joined to me and I will stay joined to you" "The Fruits of God's Spirit make us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled" (adaptations of John chapter 15 and Galatians chapter 5)

Would you also like a bunch of grapes to share?



Talk together about the things trees and plants need to grow (light, soil, water etc). Think especially of how fruit grows on the tree and then ceases to grow when picked (although it may ripen).

Share the concept of Jesus as the true vine and how important it is for Christians to stay connected to him in all they do. Remember how for plants to flourish they need appropriate nourishment etc and to be rooted—link this with the Fruits of the Spirit from Galatians that Christians should grow if they are rooted in Jesus.

Add grapes with the gifts of the Spirit to your grapevine. Children may be invited to add a grape with a drawing of themselves to the vine if they wish or, if this is too personal, to add another quality they feel people should aspire to.

Pray that you will grow as people each day and grow your different gifts.

Share the grapes!

Thank you World!?

You need: globe or map of the world; a selection of items—food or other goods—from different areas of the world; photographs of the growers etc of these different products—some of these may be hard-hitting (child labour in India for example) your choice of photograph will affect the approach your worship takes. A selection of Fair Trade products could be especially helpful.

Interactive: children may bring in labels to add to the display. If you have a suitable foodstuff amongst your collection you might have these available for tasting!

Talk about foods you like and dislike, which foods you think are good for you and which not. Use the packages to find different places in the world your food comes from and make these on your map. With younger children it will be enough to stop at this point and conclude with thank you prayers for all the different people who have worked to bring us food.

With older pupils there is an opportunity to take things further by thinking of the inequalities of our world and understand how many of our food products are produced by people who cannot hope to aspire to the same lifestyle as ourselves. Your prayers will then take on a very different tenor as you pray for the poor of the world and the inequalities of our systems.

Instruction for drawing a labyrinth can be found on You Tube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyEwgGuWzCI>

The following page can be photocopied to use as a starting point.



Appendix four—suggestions for classroom worship linking to the church calendar

If you are following the same theme in your classroom acts of worship as the rest of the school then this appendix will not be for you, but if you have some autonomy—read on! The chart extends over several pages and tells you: the key Christian dates in the month and a little about their meaning; it also suggests what could be some of the **themes for your worship**, linked with the church season; and there are some display suggestions for a worship cum reflection board.

This is a pick and mix chart—not a “do it all chart”

<p>September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvest Festival (moveable) • 29th Feast of the Archangels Michael, Gabriel, Raphael—Michaelmas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvest is a time for thinking about food producers locally and internationally, as well as giving thanks. Look especially for stories related to Fair Trade or the concept of the world as a global village. Displays can be beautiful in oranges, reds and golds—including real items such as ears of wheat or dried flowers. Various herbs are particularly linked to 14th September (Holy Cross Day) because their leaves emerge from the stem in a crosswise pattern— look for basil, oregano, thyme, lemon balm, salvia, marjoram or various mints. They could add a perfume to your collective worship display! • An angel is literally a messenger from God—this is a time to think about those who bring news and important messages to the world, or to hear stories about listening and not listening. Displays relating to angels can be rather kitsch, and they can be too readily mistaken for fairies—why not think about things which link people or bring them together . What about an interactive board with your messages and hopes for the world?
<p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4th Francis of Assisi—linked particularly with animals and pets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about a display linked to the animals in your lives—the pets, animals on the verge of extinction, animals we depend on, etc. This is a time of the year when some churches like to have pet services or blessings of the animals, and this could be a suitable worship theme, especially with your youngest children, as you think of the importance of animals in all their different forms. <p><i>Just a reminder—October is NOT all about Hallowe'en . Hallowe'en is simply the eve of All Saints Day which is actually the November theme.</i></p>

<p>November</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't separate Hallowe'en (i.e. All Saints Eve) from the rest of the seasonal celebrations of All Saints and All Souls—your worship should concentrate on the
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st All Saints Day 2nd All Souls Day 11th Remembrance Day 22nd St Cecilia's Day (patron saint of music) 30th St Andrew's Day—apostle and patron saint of Scotland Depending on how the days fall, Advent Sunday and the new Church Year could be in November or December 	<p>celebration of the saints— great Christians who have gone before us—and of other significant people. An equally good theme is "heroes and heroines". Your worship can include especially the saints whose feast day falls in November, or those specifically commemorated in your local parish church's dedication and maybe even the name of your school. St Cecilia's Day gives you an opportunity to focus on music. A reflection board could include space for pupils to add their heroes to those you have chosen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Souls is the time to remember those whom we know who have died—and if everyone feels happy with this, you could add photographs of departed loved family members of your class into the display ("Ben's Grandad John"). There may be time in your class worship to share special memories of these people and thank God for them. (This obviously has to be handled sensitively—you will know immediately whether this is appropriate or not in your class and at this time.) You can also add poppies and war linked photographs to add to this concept of November as a month of remembering. In some countries migratory birds are used as emblems of this time of year—for example, your display could include images of the swans which overwinter at Welney in our Diocese every year. These pass through our locality in the same way those we are remembering (and we ourselves) pass through our world.
<p>December</p> <p>The Four Sundays of Advent—up until December 17th the Church prepares for the coming of the reign of God which is announced by the prophets and John the Baptist. Only on 17th do we turn towards Christmas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6th St Nicholas' Day (generally agreed to be the original "Santa Claus") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instead of getting lured into the advertisers' trap of beginning Christmas as early as possible, make your classroom worship board an Advent Board. You may well have an Advent Calendar (our current shop bought ones are really December calendars—if you are making advent calendars then get the dates right!) and / or Advent Wreaths. In Advent the sun is at its dimmest and the full moon at its brightest—so celestial signs such as stars, comets and planets are traditional for displays in this season. This is the time to share the great Old Testament stories in worship. Why not have a Jesse tree rather than a Christmas tree—so that you can decorate it with symbols relating to the stories told at Advent? If you do set up a crib, observe the tradition of not placing Mary and Joseph there until 17th and Jesus there the last day of term (that's still too early!). The wise men should not arrive at the stable until next term—i.e. on Epiphany.

January

6th **Epiphany** ("Twelfth Night" - remember the carol "The Twelve Days of Christmas") As well as the story of the visit of the Wise Men to the infant Jesus, the key Epiphany stories are the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist and the Miracle of the Wedding of Cana. Epiphany season lasts until Candlemas on February 2nd. Epiphany means "appearance", "revelation" - it celebrates Jesus being revealed to the world.

25th—celebrates the conversion of St Paul—one of the first great Christian missionaries. As a result the week leading to this date is now the week of prayer for Christian unity.

- The two key themes of this month both have a **world dimension and a world church dimension**. There are also the images of God appearing through the everyday miracles of creation i.e. the star of the Wise Men, the river water and the dove at the Baptism, and in the jars of water at Cana.
- Epiphany and the Wise Men are of course always linked with **gift giving**.
- Worship themes and displays in this month can revolve around the many gifts we receive—including **the gifts of Creation** as the days slowly begin to lengthen.
- The Church calendar is now running counter to the commercial one—we are probably in post Christmas over-indulgence January dieting (!) but the Church is in celebration mode still. It is a time for telling stories, sharing and dreaming new dreams! Why not share Christian or secular / moral **stories from around the world** that are full of colour and interest?
- Reflective worship boards can concentrate on gifts—not the already broken (?) Christmas toys but the many **good things that we have in our lives**.

February

- 2nd Candlemas—the presentation of the baby Jesus in the Jerusalem Temple. This is the last day of Epiphany and the day we should actually take down Christmas decorations! The Church now turns towards Lent.
- 14th St Valentine's Day
- Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent (actual date depends on date of Easter).

- Candlemas is traditionally a time for **processions**—why not break out of your classroom for your worship and process to different places in the school to pray or reflect (to the entrance to pray for visitors, to the hall to pray for the cooks and for those in the world who are not fed etc).
- Valentine's Day is another day that advertisers seem to have taken over, but it could rather be used as an opportunity to reaffirm the **respect and affection** you feel for each other as a class with a sharing act. Alternatively, or additionally, find out about and think about the **neighbours** who surround the school such as sheltered housing...)
- Shrove Tuesday aka Mardi Gras is Carnival time and glorious celebration before Lent begins. The biblical stories to be told at this time are Esther and Jonah which tell of **roles reversed, about the question of what gives life value, and how true justice wins the day**. There are also popular folk tales written for this time of year which have those same messages—Pinocchio, Cinderella, Rapunzel.

<p>March</p> <p>Lent</p> <p>Mothering Sunday comes at the mid point of Lent</p> <p>Easter may fall in March, but will more probably be in April</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lent is a time of renewal, of cleansing, of preparation, of simplicity, of self-discipline. It is about one tenth of the year, and it is the time that Christians look at themselves and their unhealthy ways—it is a time of recuperation, and refreshment, in preparation for Easter. Classroom reflection boards can be used as “Lent calendars” to count down the forty days of Lent -perhaps a winding path through a desert landscape with a travelling counter to move along. A Noah’s Ark is also a good image to use as the story has the same component parts of a 40 day time of trial and a time of cleansing—with younger pupils you could start an Ark display with 40 portholes and take it in turns to create an animal head to go in the window each day! The actual word “Lent” in English comes from “lengthen” - it is the time that days are lengthening and signs of Spring begin to multiply. Reflection corners over Lent can start bare and gradually be filled with the flowers and other signs of Spring—branches which will flower are especially appropriate, such as forsythia and pussy willow. This is a time to share stories about people who have changed—these could be stories of people Jesus met, but other stories from the class library can help convey the same messages.
<p>April</p> <p>Some of April may fall in Lent. Once you return to school after the Easter holidays you are in the Easter season which lasts 50 days until Pentecost. Pentecost normally falls either at the beginning or end of the Summer half term holiday.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One feature of Easter celebrations is a paschal candle, which is lit every day of the season. By tradition it has: five grains of incense pressed into the wax (the five wounds of Christ on the cross); the numerals of the year: alpha and omega which as the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet show God as the Lord of time and history. This could be a time to use candle prayers (see page 11). Biblical stories particularly associated with this time are the Exodus, and Ruth and Naomi. These are both stories of refugees and could be a time to concentrate on those who are struggling for freedom around the world.

<p>May</p> <p>Rogation</p> <p>Ascension Day</p> <p>Pentecost</p>	<p>There are particular themes associated with the festivals days this month which also make good collective worship themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At Rogation the congregations pray particularly for their own communities (this includes the “beating of bounds”) • Ascension includes the theme of kingship • Pentecost has the themes of wind and fire, as well as being the birthday of the Church. (Some rich decorative symbols here.) <p>This is a good time of year for worship outside or “on the move”.</p> <p>For centuries Pentecost has been the time for both Jews and Christians to decorate homes with branches of fresh foliage, grasses and wild flowers—symbols of God’s life-giving bounty and the Spirit.</p> <p>The Bible stories connected with this time (beside the obvious ones!) are the Tower of Babel, Mount Sinai and the giving of the Ten Commandments, and Ezekiel’s vision of the Valley of Dry Bones—all of which can be extended to worship themes on such topics as: communities living together; rules for living; or what things are important for life.</p>
<p>June</p> <p>The Sunday after Pentecost is Trinity Sunday</p> <p>24th St John the Baptist—also the official onset of Summer</p> <p>29th St Peter & St Paul</p>	<p>Watery images abound in June with a seashell being one of the symbols of John the Baptist and fishing boats and nets being particularly associated with St Peter. The saga of St Paul’s journeys also includes the story of a shipwreck off Malta. This could be a time to share seaside stories, find out about and pray for those who work at sea and for the coastguard service. (All very appropriate with summer holidays approaching)</p>
<p>July</p> <p>In the Church Year this is “Ordinary Time”. The colour is green for growth and it is a time for teaching.</p>	<p>Although the end of the school year is approaching the teaching theme remains an appropriate one for your class! It is a time to think of the many gifts and talents that people have, how you have spent your time together as a class, and to give thanks for each other.</p>