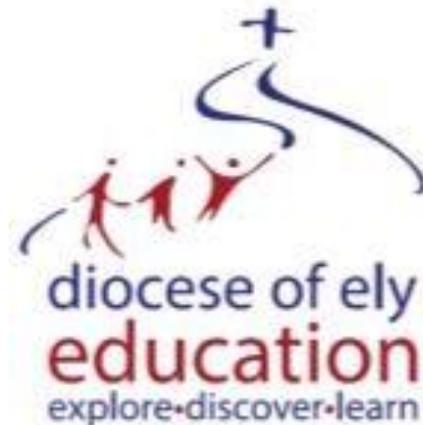


Acts of Worship Summer Term 2022



Welcome

We have compiled the suggested activities for an Act of Worship each week of the Summer Term, 2022, with a theme, relevant Bible reading, a message, an activity and prayers plus suggestions for going deeper into the text and meanings. We hope you find this useful, inspirational and relevant. It also provides your school with a focus linked to the Church readings for each week. The Church of England compiles the readings over a three-year cycle, Years A, B and C. This programme is in Church Year A.

Thank you for using our resources and materials from The Diocese of Ely Education team. They can all be found on the website <http://www.elyeducation.org/main/>

Introduction to the Acts of Worship Plan

The Church of England Lectionary is divided into three years of Bible readings (Years A, B and C) which follow on from each other in a continuous cycle. Each new Church Year begins with Advent Sunday which falls at the end of November or the beginning of December, four Sundays before Christmas Day.

On each Sunday three readings are designated for use: usually one from the Old Testament, one from the Epistles and one from the Gospels. In each of the suggested acts of collective worship above the author has taken one of these three designated readings as their theme (except when a significant Christian feast day falls on a day within that week, when the readings for this day may have been used instead of the Sunday readings). By using the suggestions above regularly, your school will be able to follow the pattern of readings which

will be taking place in your local parish church, week by week, over the whole of the Church's Year.

The dates given in the index are all Sundays. The colour is the appropriate colour of the Church's year – this will allow you to theme your hall for worship e.g. a coloured cloth for the worship table. Of course, you may choose to use some of the collective worship ideas at other times of the year, to fit in with your existing themed programme.

The short titles beside each date will allow you to select those subjects of interest to you. These materials were originally devised to be stand alone. Several schools are using the lectionary suggestion to set their theme for the week, so we include suggestions of other Bible stories on a similar theme to the original reading at the bottom of each act of worship. These are entirely optional.

Easter 1

Bible Reading

Matthew chp 28 vs 1-10

Theme: Mary Magdalene

Preparation

It is unusual to be back in school so soon after Easter Day, but this gives an ideal opportunity to retell the first and one of the most famous resurrection stories – Mary Magdalene in the garden. Easter is a story about light coming out of darkness. It is the key story on which the Christian faith is based (yes, more important than Christmas, although people often do not know it so well), and it is important the story is heard.

There are many fine art pictures of this story available through the web – make one up as slide. If you have the book "Jesus in Art" this includes suitable materials.

Have a hollow chocolate egg available – one WITHOUT anything inside.

Introduction

Find out what kind of things the children received and did on Easter Day. Bring out the Easter egg. Recap very briefly the story of the death of Jesus. Remind the assembly how Jesus was buried in a cave tomb that had a rolling stone across the entrance – the egg looks like the stone. But when the egg is broken it looks like the empty cave tomb, which is the next part of the story.

The Message

Tell the story of how Mary Magdalene and her friend Mary came to the tomb to look after Jesus' body but when they reached the tomb they found that the stone had been rolled away, the tomb was empty and one of God's messengers, an angel, gave them the amazing news that Jesus was

risen. The women went to fetch Jesus' disciples and share the great news. On the way they met Jesus himself - they touched him and worshipped him - they knew for certain that he was alive.

How do you think the disciples felt when Mary Magdalene came back with her strange story? Do you think that if you had been there you would have believed her story? Why? Why not? In Palestine at that time women were often thought to be less important than men and their word wasn't always believed. Perhaps some of the disciples thought "daft women, off their heads with grief", but they soon found out differently! Jesus always showed great sympathy and care for women, the poor, and other disadvantaged people in his ministry - so perhaps his appearing to the women first was part of this message too!

There are several other stories in the Gospels about people who saw Jesus alive after this, in fact over the next forty days hundreds of people saw him and spread the amazing news. And ever since that day millions and millions of people have become Christians because they believe in the resurrection of Jesus and the story of Mary Magdalene.

Prayer

Thanks for all Christians down the centuries who have believed and shared the message of the risen Jesus, so that we can hear it today.

Taking the theme further this week you could:

- there are just four days in this week because of the Monday Bank Holiday so spend the other days looking at some of the other resurrection stories e.g.: the disciples by the Sea of Galilee John 21; the road to Emmaus Luke 24. 13-52 (not doubting Thomas - that's next week!)

Easter 2

Alphabets

READING

Revelation chapter 1 verse 8

PREPARATION

Have some large copies of letters from different alphabets including a Greek alpha and omega. A website such as <http://www.word2word.com/alphabet.html> will help you find these readily. Make sure there are some which are recognisable and others which are not. Between the different alphabets make sure you have the letters to spell "Jesus" and "God" (and a few spare letters). Also key "alpha omega" into Google Images and have some images of the two letters intertwined as a Christian symbol - there are plenty to choose from.

INTRODUCTION

Show the different letters and ask children to guess what the English equivalent might be. (Keep back the alpha and omega)

When you have done sufficient guessing, ask for volunteers to come and try to spell "Jesus" and "God" from your letter jumble.

MESSAGE

Tell the children that you are going to show them a way to spell God with only two letters.

Show the alpha - ask them if this is the beginning of the alphabet, then what should the letter at the end of the alphabet be? Of course you will get the answer Z, but some of the more alert ones may realise that you are not talking about the English alphabet. Show the omega and tell them this is the Greek alphabet - the same language the New Testament was first written down in.

Read Revelation chapter 1 verse 8 and explain how this is telling us that God was there at the beginning of time and will be there right through to the end of time and for everything in between, just like the alpha and omega letters are the beginning and end of the alphabet and hold everything between them. Show them your intertwined alpha and omega symbols and explain that this is how people can write God's name with just two letters, but it is also a way of reminding people how great God is AND a promise that He is with us at all times - from the beginning of our lives until the end.

PRAYER

.Dear Lord, we thank you for your promise that you are with us from the beginning to the end of our time. Help us to remember your promise when times are difficult or when we feel alone. Help us to celebrate your promise and remember you when times are good. Be our alpha and omega. Amen

Easter 3

Bravery

READING

Acts chapter 9 verses 1-20

PREPARATION

A large bag containing a piece of rope. A volunteer briefed to act scared.

INTRODUCTION

Show your bag with the rope and explain that your (relative) has lent you their pet snake so that you can show it to everyone (can you keep the bag twitching?). Ask your volunteer to come up and help you remove the snake from the bag; as they do so, helpfully inform them that the snake is not poisonous, but to be careful as it might crush their hand if they handle it incorrectly. Your volunteer withdraws their offer of help! See if you can find a real volunteer instead to take on the task- the "snake" will rapidly be shown to be harmless!

MESSAGE

Sometimes in our lives we get asked to do things which really scare us, just like (name volunteer) being asked to handle a snake. There was a follower of Jesus who felt he had been told by God to do something really terrifying. His name was Ananias, and he believed God was telling him to go and

find the person who had come to his hometown to try to murder him! Not only that, but Ananias was told that this murderer, whose name was Saul, needed his help because he was ill.

Saul was a Christian catcher - he hunted down Christians and handed them over for trial and execution. On his way to Damascus, where Ananias lived, Saul had heard and seen Jesus in a vision. It was such an amazing vision that Saul went blind because of the brightness of the light and had to be led into Damascus by his soldiers. Ananias was very scared, but he went to see Saul and told him all about Jesus. He then prayed with Saul and Saul's sight suddenly came back. Saul was convinced that Ananias was speaking the truth - and he became a Christian too. In fact Saul became a famous Christian leader and missionary. We usually call him Paul now, and he wrote most of the letters which appear in the New Testament. Perhaps all this would never have happened if Ananias had not conquered his fear and done what he believed God had told him to do.

PRAYER

Pray that we will always have the strength to do what we know is right, especially when we are worried or scared.

Paul went on to become a very brave leader of the early church and on his missionary journeys he suffered great hardships, including being badly beaten, imprisoned, and eventually executed for his faith - share some of the stories about him this week.

Easter 4

Sheep

Bible Reading

John 10.27

Preparation

You need at least one toy animal, preferably a lamb. A variety of such toys would be helpful. (Real pets would be even better!) - Alternatively project appropriate photographs.

Introduction

Show your toy animal(s). Discuss with the assembly the kind of things you would have to do to look after the animal if it was actually real - alternatively, discuss looking after pets. Work the conversation round to looking after sheep...

Message

Farmers have kept sheep for thousands years. There are a lot of stories about sheep and shepherds in the Bible, one of the best known is a story Jesus told about a sheep which got lost. (Luke chapter 15 verses 3-7) : This shepherd had just one hundred sheep. He didn't use dogs to control the sheep, he knew all their names, and when he called them, they would come and follow him, because they trusted and loved him. The shepherd stayed with his sheep all day, he led them around to find the best grass for them to eat and took them to the streams so they could drink. At the end of the day he would shut them up safe in a big sheepfold, and he would sleep in the doorway of the fold, so that wild animals could not get in and attack the sheep, or thieves break in and steal them.

But one day was different, as the shepherd counted his sheep into the sheepfold, he realised that there was one missing. He left his friends to look after the other ninety-nine sheep and retraced his steps to find the one sheep he had lost. You may think sheep all look the same, but, because the shepherd knew his sheep so well, he knew exactly which sheep was missing and where he had last remembered seeing her. He kept looking in the ditches and in the thorn bushes, over the cliff edges and in the streams, until at last he found his sheep. He was delighted to have her back, and I expect the sheep was pretty pleased too in its own sheep way!

Jesus told this story to help people understand what God was like; he explained how God was like the shepherd, because He loved all His people and did not want to lose any one of them, just as the shepherd did not want to lose any of his sheep.

Jesus is called the Good Shepherd too (John chapter 10 verse 11) because of the love he has for his people. He told his friends that he loved his people so much that he would die for them, just like a shepherd would risk his life by fighting wild animals to protect his sheep. Soon after Jesus told his friends this he was arrested and crucified, and we heard the story about what happened to him then as we prepared for Easter. Since his death and resurrection, millions of Christians have followed the voice of Jesus and become his sheep. They know and trust him as their leader, and know he loves them in return.

Prayer

Father we thank you that you have sent us Jesus to be our Good Shepherd; to protect us, and to lead us.

As well as the Good Shepherd there are several other important titles of Jesus in John's Gospel: which could be a focus of your worship this week: the "Light of the World" (John 8:12), the "True Bread" (John 6:32), and the "True Light" (John 1:9). Jesus is also called the "True Vine" (John 15:1), , and the "Way" (John 14:6) the "Resurrection and Life" (John 11:25).

Easter 5 Theme: Why must I do that?

Bible reading

Acts 11.1-18

Preparation

You need some "horrible" tasks for pupils to perform – ones you know that they normally would not wish to do e.g.: search around in a bowl of mud looking for a small lost item; eat dog food (chopped up mars bars make a good imitation should anyone be brave enough to do it); hold a (toy) spider etc. You will know what tasks are likely to cause most consternation amongst your pupils – and also which squeamish pupils to ask up front to attempt them!

Introduction

Ask pupils if they ever have to do things they really do not want to do because they are so horrible. Who makes them do them? Introduce your "tasks" and select your "volunteers".

The Message

The tasks that the volunteers have been doing are a reminder of a story about one of Jesus' disciples called Peter. Peter had a most amazing dream in which he saw a huge sheet coming down out of the sky. The sheet was full of animals and Peter heard a voice saying, "kill the animals and eat them". But when Peter looked at the animals, they were all the kind of things he wasn't allowed to eat because of his religion: things like lobsters, pigs, rabbits, and ostriches. Peter was shocked because he thought God was asking him to do something really awful and break the laws of his religion, so he protested! But God had an answer for him – God said the food was clean and it could be eaten, because He, God had said so!

Have you ever had a dream which helped you sort out a problem, so that when you woke up you knew exactly what you must do next? This is that same kind of dream; because when Peter woke up he had some visitors. The visitors were not Jewish people like Peter, but Gentiles, like us. (Gentile is a special word Jews have for anyone who is not Jewish.) Normally Peter would not have spoken with them or gone with them because it was against his Jewish religion, but he remembered his dream, and knew that God was telling him these Gentile people were OK, just like the food was OK! So Peter told these Gentiles the good news all about Jesus and they became Christians.

A lot of his Jewish Christian friends were angry with Peter because they thought Gentile people should not be allowed to become Christians, so Peter had to keep on telling everyone about his special dream, until they got the message as well!

What do you think would have happened if Peter had ignored the message of the dream? (Collect suggestions). Perhaps the Gentile people like us would never have been allowed to become Christians, so there would be no churches in England or hardly anywhere else in the world at all! The whole world would have been totally different, and we might not have heard about Jesus at all! What a good thing it was that God sent Peter that very special dream!

Prayer

We thank you Lord for the work of the disciples of Jesus to bring your message to the world, so that nowadays anyone can become a Christian and follow Jesus if they want to.

Easter 6

Prayer Tree

BIBLE READING

Revelation chapter 22 verse 2 - the tree of life

Rogation (immediately before Ascension Day) is traditionally a time at which the Church prays for the local community in which it is fixed – this can include the ancient tradition of the beating of the bounds.

PREPARATION

This session requires extra preparation as it includes the creation in advance of a prayer tree in the assembly hall. The tree can be a wall display, a free-standing structure, or even a real plant. You

also need a pile of paper leaf shapes (one for each person present) and the children need to bring a pencil to assembly. **If you already have a prayer tree, use this assembly as an opportunity to reinforce its use.**

A photograph of somewhere in the world you personally would like to visit.

INTRODUCTION

Share your photograph and explain about the place and why you would like to visit it. Ask others to share where their special places or countries might be (adults might find this easier than children, simply because of their greater knowledge; some other staff might like to come prepared with pictures).

THE MESSAGE

Explain that in the very last book of the Bible there is a description of a wonderful place, the new holy city of Jerusalem. It is not the same Jerusalem as you can visit today in Israel, but a city that will be seen at the end of time. The city sounds very beautiful and there is one special verse we are going to think about today: "on either side of the river is the tree of life, with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

Can you imagine what an amazing tree that would be? A tree where you could use the leaves to cure not just people, but to cure all the things that are wrong with the world. If you had a tree like that what would you use the leaves for? Collect together different ideas – personal, local, national, global.

Our tree is not a healing tree, but it can be a praying tree, and we can use it to remember anyone or anywhere in the world and their needs.

Distribute the prayer leaves and ask children to write or draw on it someone or something which they think needs prayer – this may or may not be something you have talked about together.

PRAYER

Collect together the prayer leaves and pray using a small number of the requests that are there.

Use devices such as a "prayer hand" to think more about the nature and purpose of prayer and share prayers together - perhaps adding to the prayer tree all week.

Pentecost

Theme: Happy Birthday Church!

Bible Reading

Acts chapter 2 verses 1-21

Preparation

Have available whatever you normally have for a pupil birthday (cake, sing a song?), if you don't usually have anything visual you could on this occasion have e.g. party balloons. Have a set of "party bags" ready to give out - these should each contain just one item: a candle; something which

requires wind to work such as a toy windmill; and something such as a foreign language dictionary or a book /notice in another language; and finally a globe or map of the world. If you have the time to create several bags with differing language contents this would be even more effective.

Introduction

Talk together about birthday parties and the kind of things children have received in party bags - guess what might be in your party bags. Invite children to open the party bags *in the order listed above (with all the language bags being opened one after the other)* and tell them the gifts are a clue as to whose birthday is being celebrated - see if they can guess.

The Message

Here's the story of the first birthday party of.....the Church. (*Link the contents of the party bags with the story as you tell it.*)

It was the festival day of Pentecost. Jesus had been crucified and risen from the dead. Ten days earlier he had gone back to his Father in Heaven. All Jesus' friends and followers were together in one big room. Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of the most enormous wind! The noise and the wind filled the house where they were meeting. Then they saw what looked like fiery tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue of flame came and settled on each person there. The Holy Spirit took control of everyone, and they began speaking whatever languages the Spirit let them speak.

Many religious Jews from every country in the world were visiting Jerusalem and a crowd of them gathered when they heard all the noise. They were excited and amazed because they could hear that these uneducated followers of Jesus were all talking different languages! "Aren't these people from Galilee?" they said "Then how come they are talking all our languages? Some of us are from Parthia, Medea and Elam, others are from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, parts of Libya near Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia. Some of us were born Jews and others are visitors to Jerusalem. Yet we all hear them using our own language and telling us about the wonderful things God has done."

This must have been one of the strangest birthday parties ever, but we think of this as the birthday of the Church because this is when the new about Jesus began to spread around the world. Many of those visitors must have told this story when they got home, and many of the followers of Jesus who received the Holy Spirit travelled to tell other people the good news about Jesus. Now whichever country in the world you go to there will be Christians.

Sing Happy Birthday to the Church!

Prayer

Pray for your own local church community and your relationship with them, also for any other countries/churches with which you have a particular link.

Can you invite people from your local churches in throughout this week to be a part of your worship and celebrate the big birthday with you?

Trinity

Theme: The Secret Servant

Bible Reading

Mark Chapter 9 verses 30-37

Preparation

For the introduction you will need various items which mark stages in a person's life e.g. a christening mug, a school certificate or reading book, a trophy, a driving licence, a wedding ring, a picture of a house, a gift with a label "retirement present" - if you use PowerPoint images instead of real items then these can be gradually unveiled, but it will be less interactive.

For the "secret servant prayer" you need to distribute something to everyone in the room which can be symbolically collected in afterwards e.g. pieces of wool which can be tied into a prayer net or on a washing line, or stickers or stars which could be added to a chart, or perhaps an item such as a pebble which could be placed on the assembly table next to the cross. (This may be a prolonged exercise if you have a large school, and you may need to adapt this idea in some way e.g something to represent each class.)

If you are familiar with Graham Kendrick's hymn "The Servant King" you may like to use this today.

Introduction

Ask for volunteers to come forward and hold the different items you have collected (distribute these in a random order). Go along your line of volunteers and ask them what they have, and what age they think a person would be when they received or bought something like that. Ask another child to sort the volunteers into a timeline, showing the different stages of a person's life.

Work your way along the line showing how all through their lives people keep wanting something more or something better - they want a good education, they want a new car, they want enough money to buy a new house, they want people to look up to them and respect them etc

Message

One day Jesus' twelve disciples were having a bit of an argument about which one of them was the greatest - every one of them wanted to think he was the most important, the most respected and the best liked. When Jesus asked them what they had been talking about they were ashamed of what they had been saying, and they didn't answer him. Have you ever felt like that?

Jesus could see that needed some help and advice, so he sat them down and said to them "If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all, and servant of all." What do you think he meant?

We know that Jesus never worried about whether important people liked him or disapproved of him. He didn't try to impress people with his possessions or try to earn a lot of money. The things that were most important to Jesus were doing what God wanted him to do and helping (serving) other people. This is why he told his disciples not to try to keep pushing to the front of the queue, but to be content with being unnoticed and the servant of all.

Now is the time to use your prayer items (see above) ask the children to think of something kind or supportive they could do for another person. It needs to be something which can be done "in secret"

and without drawing attention to oneself. You may like to ask some children to share examples of things you could do in case others are struggling for ideas.

Prayer

Ask everyone to hold their pebble / sticker/ wool/ etc very carefully and concentrate on it. Ask them to think / pray about a person they could help.

You may also like to use this prayer written by Pope Paul VI:

Make us worthy, Lord, to serve our fellowmen throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger. Give them through our hands, this day their daily bread, and by our understanding love, give peace and joy

As the children leave, collect up the prayer items to make a "secret servant display". This will depend on what items you have chosen e.g. every child could file past the table and leave a stone, but if they need to tie a piece of wool on a prayer net it is probably best to collect these in a basket to add to the net later. You can refer to this in later acts of worship and ask whether children have remembered, even performed, their "secret servant prayers". (But don't ask them what they were about, or they won't be secrets anymore!)

The theme of acting humbly or being a servant comes through in the Old Testament and in Jesus' own life: the servants and the talents Matthew 25:14-28; You cannot serve God and money Luke 16:13; Jesus acts like a servant, washing his disciples' feet John 13: 1-17

Trinity 1

Theme: David's dreadful deed

Bible reading

2 Samuel chapter 12 verses 1-4

Preparation

You need a photograph of your own pet if you have one, or if not, will another member of staff oblige? A photograph of a baby lamb could also be helpful.

Introduction

Show the pet photograph and talk a little bit about the animal and what it means to you. Ask if anyone else has a pet - obviously there will be a rush of answers at this point, but ask just a few of the children to say what animal they have and how they feel about it (try to curb the long sagas - this is only the introduction to the assembly!) Does anyone have a pet lamb? We are going to hear a parable story from the Bible about a pet lamb, but I should warn you now, it is a sad story.

The Message

There were once two men who lived next door to each other. One man was very rich and owned a huge flock of sheep. His neighbour was quite poor, but he owned a lamb which he kept as a pet. He loved the lamb so much that he used to feed it with his own hands, and let it sit on his lap. It was just like one of the family - just like your pets are! Then one dreadful night a visitor came to the rich man's house. The rich man wanted to throw a party for him and decided that roast lamb would be a

very good thing to have on the menu. But he didn't send his servants to kill one of his own sheep for the meal, O no, he sent them to steal his poor neighbour's lamb and kill it and cook it! And that's exactly what they did.

What do you think of the way the rich man acted? What words would you use to describe him?
(Selfish, greedy, mean, self-centred, uncaring, bully)

Now this was a made-up story. A man of God, a prophet called Nathan, told the story to King David. He told the story because David had done something much worse than the rich man and the lamb - he had organised for a man to be killed so that he could marry his wife! David hadn't really thought about what he was doing, he just saw something he wanted - and he took it! It wasn't until he heard Nathan's story about the lamb that he suddenly realised how bad a thing he had done.

What about us? We haven't killed anybody or anything, but there are other things that we do which make other people miserable. Nathan was saying to David that he needed to check his attitudes and behaviour against what God expects, not just do dreadful things because he could. Nathan's story says the same message to us today.

Prayer

Dear Lord,

Help me to do only good today, and if I have hurt others or let them down, help me to put it right.
Amen.

Reflect on the message of the prayer.

The theme of being sorry and reconciliation is a strong one in the Bible including Peter asking how often he should forgive someone (Matthew 18 ;21f); the story of Jonah is also one where people recognise, they have done wrong and work to put things right. The supreme act of reconciliation is of course the death of Jesus on the cross and you might like to adapt some of the stories about [different versions of the cross symbol](#) as acts of worship.

Trinity 2

Theme: Everybody Equal!

Bible reading

Galatians 3.23-29

Preparation

You are going to play a game of "Simon Says" – it would be helpful to think about the categories you are going to use beforehand to ensure that you do not inadvertently discriminate against any particular children – see below.

Introduction

Have you ever stopped to think that although we are all different and special, we are all very similar to each other too? For example, we all need food, although your favourite food might be pizza and the person next to you might prefer fish and chips, some people like their food really hot and spicy and other people might like ice cream best! Let's play a game of "Simon Says" to see how alike or different we all are.

As you play the game, make sure that you have some categories for which everyone will stand up ("stand up if you have teeth"), as well as others for which fairly large groups should stand (stand up if you have brown eyes"). Emphasise that although there are differences between us, we actually have a lot of things in common because we are all human beings.

The Message

Two thousand years ago, in the time of the Roman Empire when the Church was getting started, people were divided into many different groups and often they looked down on other people who were not like them. Men looked down on women because they thought it was best to be a man. People from some countries thought they were better than people from the country next door. Rich people turned poor people into slaves, and sometimes treated them badly, because they didn't think they were proper people like themselves. Nobody seriously thought that everybody could be absolutely equal, and that it didn't really matter where they were born, or how rich or poor they were, or whether they were a man or a woman. Then Jesus started treating everyone he met as if they were all important. He talked to women; he touched lepers whom nobody else would even go near; he behaved as if poor people were just as important as rich people. The rich rulers of his country hated him for this, and they thought he was strange and mad because he was not acting in the right way....but Jesus just kept on doing it!

Jesus' followers taught the same thing as he did. In the Bible we have a letter from Paul to the Christians who lived in Galatia, and it has one very important statement in it, here it is:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

In other words, it doesn't matter who or what you are; Jesus loves you. This is why for hundreds and thousands of years people have followed Jesus, because of this promise that he doesn't care who or what you are, or what you have done in the past, he still loves you.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for your promise that you love us all the same, whoever we are and whatever we do. May we remember that promise and be ready to treat everyone with respect, whether they are like us, or very different.

Trinity 3

Don't look back.

BIBLE READING

Luke 9: 57-62

PREPARATION

You need a story the children will know where someone makes up their mind to do something, and goes on to do it, regardless of what stands in the way. Examples could include:

The Little Mermaid - Disney style (or Hans Christian Anderson)

Once Ariel has met and fallen in love with the prince, she discovers that to become human she must never talk, and so she determinedly sticks to that, not looking back at what might be.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone - At the end of the book, Harry and his friends have to face a number of tasks to find the Philosopher's Stone and ensure that it can never be used for evil. During the tasks, Harry's friends, Ron and Hermione, are trapped. Harry is worried about them but knows that he has to put them out of his mind and concentrate on the task, which is much bigger than he or his friends.

Billy Elliott - Billy's determination to become a ballet dancer means that he has to learn to ignore all prejudice, all the worries that his family have about money and even leaving behind Michael, the one friend who has supported him all the way through. In the final scene, we see his family and friends coming to watch Billy dance and in one triumphant leap we all know that that single mindedness was worth all the sacrifice that it required.

You will also need a staff, or some sort of walking stick for the story telling.

INTRODUCTION

Introduce the story you have chosen

- what did the main character decide to do?
- what did that involve?
- what would have happened if they had 'looked back'

Maybe someone in the school, or the local community, has achieved something special - a music or sports award, some special achievement in the community...- now would be a chance to celebrate that, and talk about the hard work and dedication that it took to get there.

THE MESSAGE - Don't look back

Tell the story as one of Jesus followers, with just a staff for the journey, journeying to share the good news of Jesus with others. The man is sitting down, taking a drink whilst on a journey.

'I always seem to be walking these days. I'm always going on to the next place - wondering where God will take me now.

Sometimes I wonder where it all began - did it begin in that room in Jerusalem, when we

were all together - the day the Holy Spirit came? From that day onwards, we just wanted to tell everyone about Jesus Christ, and all that he had done.

Did it begin even earlier when we were all gathered together after Jesus died? We were so shocked when he suddenly appeared among us, saying 'Peace be with you.' None of us doubted that this was really Jesus, who had really died and now was really alive again. None of us doubted that it would change our lives once again.

But then, I realise that it really all began that first time my life changed. I was just getting on with my life, being no one very special, and doing nothing really important, when I met this man, Jesus. He was walking on the Jerusalem road, with a few friends around him, talking to them, and teaching them. Perhaps I was particularly bored that day, for I moved closer to hear what he was saying. I couldn't really understand it all then, but it seemed as if he had been walking for some time. He turned to his friends and said, 'Foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' I don't normally go rushing off to talk to strangers, but I suddenly wanted to offer him a room to rest in my parents' house. They wouldn't mind, surely. I'd always been a good son to them, and they knew I would look after them in old age - they wouldn't mind this stranger for a day or two.

I'd just about summoned up the courage to speak to him when he turned and looked at me. There was something in his look - his brown eyes seemed to pierce right into the heart of me. And all he said was 'Follow me'.

I looked back at my parents' home - and they came rushing out, as if they knew something special was going on. I think my father would have rushed out to stop me - who would carry on the family business, who would look after them as they got older... - but I saw my mother put her hand on his arm and hold him back. She's always been very wise. 'If God is calling him, who are we to stop him.'

They were in Jerusalem for the Passover when Jesus died. My father came to visit me. 'Now will you see sense, and come home', but my mother kept saying, 'Leave him alone, can't you see he's grieving. Let's pray that God helps him.' They were there again for the feast of Pentecost. This time, even my father knew that I had to move on, to tell others about the good news of Jesus. I was away in the north when my Father died. I thought my mother would be angry with me, but by then, they had both become believers. She wouldn't let me stay, she said - 'I follow Jesus here in my home, , but you must spread the good news to those who have never heard,' I've heard my mother is ill now. Peter said I should go to her. I hope I reach her in time, but even if I don't, I know we shall meet again in heaven.

If I'd known then what I know now, would I still go out to meet that stranger and speak to him? I know that some of our number have already been put in jail or flogged for their beliefs? Would I have left my village, my friends, my parents, my life? I think about the way Jesus looked at me and said, 'Follow me' and know I could not have done anything else.'

If you are unhappy about acting in role, you could retell the story in the third person.

PRAYER

Give thanks for those who have had a vision, a goal and had the courage to work for it, no matter what, and us to find inspiration in that, or use this prayer from Melanesia

O Jesus, be the canoe that holds me in the sea of life;
be the rudder that helps me in the straight road;
be the outrigger that supports me in times of temptation;
let your Spirit be my sail that carries me through each day.
Keep my body strong, so I can paddle steadfastly on in the voyage of life.

Amen

There are many other Bible stories where someone was called by God and it was a real challenge for them to go forward in faith and not look back - in fact sometimes they complained to God in very strong terms about what He had called them to do. Look in your Bible story books for people such as Gideon, Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. The story of Ruth also encapsulates this where Ruth goes on to an unknown land and her sister-in-law Orpah turns back.

Trinity 4

Respect!

BIBLE READING

2 Kings chapter 5 verses 1-14 Naaman the leper

INTRODUCTION

Ask who has had measles, chickenpox or other illness which affects the skin. Find out what happened when they became ill – were they allowed to come to school or see their friends? Did they have to wait until all the marks had disappeared before things got back to normal? What would have happened if the marks had never disappeared?

THE MESSAGE

Explain briefly how there is a disease called leprosy the effects of which never go away once you have caught it, and for many hundreds of years people who caught it were thrown out of their homes and had to go and live where they could not infect other people.

There is a story in the Bible about a very important man, a famous soldier, who caught leprosy, and who very nearly missed a chance of being cured because he was so proud.

Tell how Naaman went to a neighbouring country to look for a cure for his leprosy because his servant girl had told him about Elisha, the famous man of God. But Naaman was so important, that he didn't go looking for Elisha, he went straight to the king of the country and expected him to sort things out! When at last Naaman finally arrived at Elisha's house, Elisha didn't even bother to come out and see him – instead, he sent instructions that Naaman should go and stand in the river and

duck his head under the water seven times. Naaman was furious! He was angry because Elisha had not come out to see him and treated him with enough respect. He was also angry because the river Jordan was shallow and muddy – not like the much better rivers back home! In fact Naaman was so angry that he began storming off in rage – but one of his servants stopped him. He bravely asked him why he wouldn't do what he was told – after all if the man of God had asked him to do something really difficult, he would have done it wouldn't he? So why not do something really easy? Naaman was not stupid – he realised his servant was right, and so he went and dipped himself in the river as he has been instructed to do, and after seven times he came up clean and well!

Sometimes we refuse to listen to other people's ideas because we think we always know best; we don't respect them. If Naaman had been like that he would never have followed the advice of his two servants and of Elisha the man of God, and he would not have been healed. Will his story help us to remember to treat other people with respect also?

PRAYER

Pray for the people who are treated without respect because they are poor or ill, young or old, or seem unimportant. Ask that we may remember to respect others and listen to them, just as we wish to be respected ourselves.

There are several well-known Christian songs on this broad theme of respect and equality - they and their message could form the focus for some acts of worship e.g. "In Christ there is no East or West"; "Make me a channel of your peace" (the prayer of St Francis);