

Getting the most out of Collective Worship in the Classroom

Support and guidance for planning and leading Collective Worship in the classroom
in Canterbury and Rochester Diocesan Schools

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the LORD is God. It is He, who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

Psalm 100: 1-4



What is worship?



For Christians, worship is about **coming into God's presence** and giving **glory**; an act of **praise** and **adoration** through which they develop their relationship with God and obedience to His word. It is through encountering God within worship that they are formed (and transformed) as God's people – this can take place anywhere and at any time and isn't just what happens inside a church service. It requires the right spirit and heart, which is a very personal thing.

'True worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth.' John 4:22

Collective worship that is ... Inclusive, invitational and inspiring

Collective worship in Church of England schools must recognise the collectivity of all participants, so must not assume that all have the same beliefs and values. All acts of worship must therefore be, inclusive, invitational and inspiring.

In a Church of England school, collective worship at it best is:

- 🕯 **Invitational**, offering everyone the opportunity to engage in the act of worship, whilst allowing the freedom for those of other faiths and none to be present with integrity.
- 🕯 **Inspiring and creative, impacting** the whole community and motivating them into action.
- 🕯 **Inclusive**, where all are **included, have a voice** and are **listened to**.
- 🕯 A **valued** part of the culture of the school, **breathing life** into every aspect of the school day.



Is it the Heartbeat of the school?

'time to breathe'

How can you be creative with this valuable time?

Guidance on structuring worship in the classroom

For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:20

The worship co-ordinator in your school will let you know the planning that you should be following for acts of worship for your school community and help you with any additional questions you have or support you might need. Worship in the classroom is a great way to spend quality time with your class, in a different way to teaching them, without thinking about targets, success criteria, outcomes etc. It allows the children to enter worship in a more intimate way, where many children feel more comfortable to interact and join in. It is also a fantastic opportunity for the children to lead some or most of the worship as they often feel safer in front of a small audience. You know your class the best, so when planning worship in the classroom, ensure it is suitable and relevant for the age and needs of the children.

Collective worship, wherever you are, should follow the [Gather, Engage, Respond and Send worship structure](#)

	Gather	Engage	Respond	Send
Key ideas	<p>We are invited to prepare our hearts and minds to meet with God.</p> <p>We gather together for this special time as a community</p>	<p>We engage with the big things and the little things in life</p> <p>We encounter Jesus and the stories of the Bible</p> <p>We listen to God’s message and how consider how it might apply to our lives.</p>	<p>We respond to what we have heard and seen through prayer, silence, stillness and reflection.</p> <p>We are given the invitation to worship God in different ways.</p>	<p>We are sent out to love and serve one another and to make a difference in the world</p> <p>We are all sent out with God’s blessing</p>
Biblical context	<p>The next holy day almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.</p> <p>Acts 13:44</p>	<p>Jesus told them a story to teach them that they should keep on talking with God and not give up.</p> <p>Luke 18:1</p> <p>He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables.</p> <p>Mark 4:2</p> <p>Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work.</p> <p>2 Tim. 3:16,17</p>	<p>But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.</p> <p>Luke 15:6</p> <p>In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do.</p> <p>Matthew 6:14 (<i>The Message</i>)</p>	<p>So the word of God spread</p> <p>Acts 6:7</p> <p>I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.</p> <p>John13:15</p>

Questions to support planning an act of collective worship in the classroom:

- Is there a clear, simple message that flows through the act of worship?
- How will I illustrate the message and enable my class to access it? (Make sure this illustration doesn't distract from the Biblical teaching and message).
- Is the act of worship built around the Bible text/story for that session?
- How will I communicate this Bible text / story to my class?
- How could I use 'I wonder' questions to make the children dig deeper, explore, ponder and reflect on the meaning within the Bible text/ story?
- How will I invite the pupils to respond to the message and Bible text/story?
- How will I use the pupils within the act of worship? What parts could they plan and lead?
- How will I incorporate a time of reflection, stillness or silence? What part of today's message will I ask the pupils to think about in this time?
- What might the impact of the worship on the class be?

Practical points to consider:

1. Think about transitions

- How will you 'move' from a lesson into worship? How will the children know it is time for worship?
- How will you begin worship?
- How will you end worship?
- How will you create a calm, welcoming atmosphere ready for worship?

Ideas for opening and closing worship in the classroom

- 🕯️ Ensure the lesson resources have been cleared away.
- 🕯️ Begin worship with a familiar worship song – to signal that you are moving away from learning into a time of worship.
- 🕯️ Light the candle and begin with a familiar greeting.
- 🕯️ Set out a small altar or focal point, that your class has made or put together.
- 🕯️ Create your own class routines – could you choose or create your own greeting and sending prayer that is specific to your class?
- 🕯️ End worship by extinguishing the candle and saying the sending prayer together.

2. Think about the layout of your space

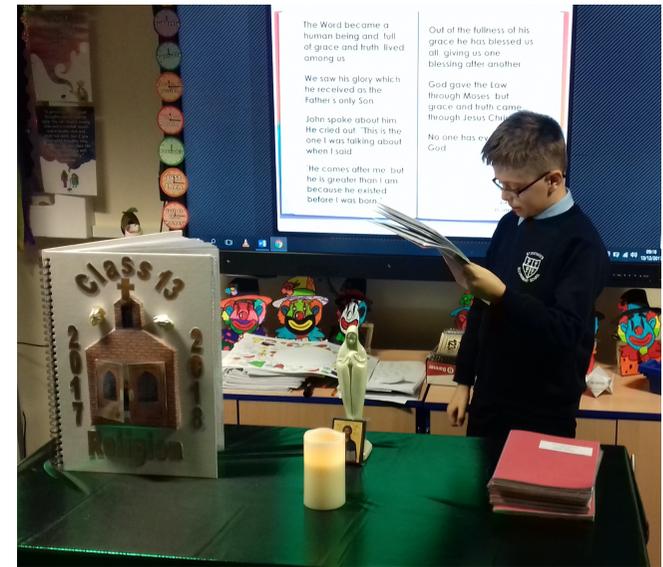
- Where will the children sit?
- Where will I be?
- Can /should this be different to a class-based lesson?
- Where else could you hold your act of worship?
the Church, school field / playground as appropriate?

3. Think about the worship table/ focal point

- How will it be distinctively Christian?
- What will go on it?
- Who will prepare the space?
- Where will it be kept between worship sessions?

4. Think about using your reflection / prayer space

- How could you use it within the worship time?
- How could you add to it?
- What could you leave in the space as a reminder of the thought or story?



Questions to consider when creating a prayer/reflection space

- 🕯 How is the space inclusive, invitational and inspiring?
- 🕯 How is the space distinctively Christian?
- 🕯 Is the prayer area in a quiet place away from other distractions that is accessible for all?
- 🕯 Is it a place where children and adults would want to go to pray or reflect?
- 🕯 Is it an interactive space rather than a display?
- 🕯 How will the children engage with the scripture, activities, objects within the space?
- 🕯 Does it flow from the worship theme?
- 🕯 How could the children take responsibility for creating the space and keeping it tidy?
- 🕯 When will the children be able to use?
- 🕯 Are they clear about the purpose of this space as a place of prayer or spiritual reflection?
- 🕯 How often will you update/change it?



<p>Check list/prompts Altar table out, Bible and candle, props for the act of worship. Calm atmosphere created? Music on, focal image up. Share a bidding prayer or greeting Light the candle</p>	<p>Check list/prompts (Sing together if allowed) – Listen to a piece of music together. Read from the Bible. Share the message. Use a variety of strategies. (Video, artwork, music, drama, props etc.) Discuss and question the children.</p>	<p>Check list/prompts Opportunity to respond – discuss, question, think. Prayer time Reflection time, opportunity for silence or stillness. Listen to a piece of music to reflect on.</p>	<p>Check list/prompts Blow candle out. Send your class out with a thought or action. Share a sending prayer / blessing as the children leave.</p>
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Pupil led worship

Worship in the classroom is the perfect ‘training ground’ for fledging worship leaders.

The SIAMS evaluation schedule says worship should ‘enable pupils as well as adults to engage in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship that lead to improving practice.’

Pupils should be responsible for the planning of worship as well as taking the lead for parts of it. You might want to ask groups of children to plan worship for the following week, working on a rota to allow all those who are keen to have a turn.

Other children could be involved in setting up the worship ‘Altar’ table, lighting the candle, reading the Bible or operating the music.

Further support

[A Fresh Approach to Collective Worship](#)

This give additional ideas and advice to supplement this short guidance document

[Booklet of prayers](#)

A selection of prayers which may be appropriate for certain acts of worship

[Prayer Spaces in Schools](#)

This website has hundreds of interactive prayer ideas that can be used in schools.

[William and Lucy lead Collective Worship at home](#)

A free resource about worship including some simple Bible stories – your school might also have bought ‘William and Lucy lead Collective Worship’ which help pupils understand more about leading worship.