



Working On Worship (17)

Building Foundations for Worship

Do Reception children have to go to assembly?

Isn't it all too much for the youngest children?

Would they be better doing something else?

The legal requirements for maintained schools

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (s.70 and 20) requires that all registered pupils (apart from those whose parents exercise the right to withdrawal) must on "each school day take part in an act of Collective Worship".

This includes children in the Foundation Stage.

Good CW in a church school will provide a real opportunity for pupils and staff to come together, sing, pray, share their hopes, needs and provide time to reflect. Worship should take them beyond themselves towards an encounter with the living God and the person of Jesus Christ. It should be meaningful for everyone.



It is helpful to keep in mind that

- pupils can be grouped in various ways for CW and can meet in a variety of places at any time of the school day. ***This means children in Foundation Stage do not have to attend worship with the whole school each day in the same place at the same time.***
- acts of worship must be appropriate for the children, taking account of the pupils' age, aptitude and family backgrounds. ***This means planning for the youngest children - not just withdrawing them if the usual provision is unsuitable.***
- in a church school, CW must be recognisably Christian. ***This means children will be introduced to worship and prayer, to God and Jesus, and to the seasons and traditions of a Christian community ~ in an age-appropriate way.***

Introducing Collective Worship to Foundation-age children



What is God? You mustn't say Christ, it's swearing! What are prayers? Why do you close your eyes? Who is Jesus? What is that person with the funny collar? What is 'amen'?

With Reception pupils, and Nursery children if wished, we are setting in place 'foundations' for understanding worship just as we are setting foundations for other areas of life / the school curriculum. **What we offer should add to every child's education and their spiritual growth, whether their family is Christian or not.**

Each child needs opportunities

- for quiet, for stillness and reflection ...
- to consider the 'God' idea, part of life for many they will meet...
- to find out about Jesus and his life.....
- to investigate what worship is all about ...
- to develop a sense of order and pattern



Each school needs simple, uncomplicated ways of providing these opportunities! A little forethought, some simple routines and some long-term planning can make CW a rich and valued time for both children and their teachers.

So what can you do

1. Join everyone else

The most obvious solution is simply to take Foundation Stage into whole school CW. It can be scary for the youngest children to be part of whole school worship **BUT** they can learn a great deal from joining everyone else ... learning to sit and listen, being part of a much bigger community, having role models to copy etc.



You can help younger children feel part of things by:

- sitting everyone in family groupings
- using songs with fewer words and / or simple actions
- introducing regular rituals, e.g. greetings used every day
- ensuring visuals are low enough to be seen by children at the front
- bringing the youngest children in last and sending them out first
- letting them leave early e.g. during a song, when there are long 'notices'

Foundation children might come in for just one or two whole school assemblies a week, when their particular needs could be better catered for e.g. by using a shorter song. On other days, they could join a KS1 assembly or have CW in their own base. **Just bringing them in for special occasion assemblies may backfire as these are often noisier or longer than usual!**

In one school, Year 5 children made special 'prayer cushions' for new reception children to sit on at worship-time! This DT activity gave the Y5's a chance to revisit what CW was about at a new level. In September, the Reception children learnt CW was going to be something special in their school lives. The children used their prayer cushions for a sort of 'glorified circle time' worship in their own base, and carried them into whole school assembly where they sat with their new Y6 buddies.

2. Do your own thing

Drawing together a group of Foundation children for their own CW may be more appropriate and meaningful. The downside is additional work so keep it simple. Think about:

Creating the right time e.g. Establish a 5 minute spot, maybe

- just before or after snack time.
- just after register in morning or afternoon.
- just before home-time.



All these have potential as fixed points when children can be sent to get things needed for worship and help set up.

Creating a 'sacred' space e.g. Move children into a different space maybe by

- setting out a special rug or assembly mats (carpet squares).
- using a candle on a shiny tray or in a big bowl of sand.
- putting on some quiet music or lighting a perfumed candle.

'Sacred' or 'holy' actually means 'separate' from the ordinary! Creating a special space is something children can do for themselves.

Creating a simple understanding e.g. Learn a special prayer / song which says what CW is for e.g. sing this to 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow'.

**We light the candle as we come
To praise and thank the Lord our God
To pray for help to share his love
And ask his blessing from above.**

In 'Jack in the Box' (see resources) the same words are used each day, often set to nursery rhyme tunes, which children join in easily and enthusiastically.

Creating a basic routine e.g. One teacher wrote about her routine *I had a special box, which we'd look in and find objects relating to a Bible story / theme. We'd explore the object and wonder what we were going to reflect on. We'd then read a story and talk about the theme using the object again e.g. a heart meant love. Next we'd sing and finally pull out a long gold ribbon the children held while we said a prayer where the children said what they'd like to thank God for.*

A routine enables children to help 'run' worship and simplifies preparation / delivery.

3. Keep it short and simple

- ✓ **Share short and simple silences** – give children experience of silence around a special candle. Use a prayer or song as the candle is lit. Hold silence for a few seconds, increasing time gradually. Extinguish the flame with a candle-snuffer.
- ✓ **Share short and simple stories** – don't go for anything complicated e.g. find a simple book of Bible stories and read from start to finish! Provide a storyteller's chair. Visitors can come and read too e.g. vicar, headteacher, older child, a parent.
- ✓ **Share short and simple songs** – learn some simple CW songs by singing them together and talking about what the words say. Use percussion while listening to songs the older children use. Use actions and movement to the same songs.

Some Ways to Introduce prayers

1. Think with children about what a prayer is and who it is addressed to. Use the idea of talking to God on the phone if that helps.
2. Use some simple prayer books and let children choose a prayer to hear.
3. Learn and use the word 'amen'. It means 'I agree'.
4. Say prayers as a group, using responses

Leader starts: Lord help ...

Child adds: XXXXXX (e.g.name of someone)

Everyone responds: Lord hear our prayer

5. Learn a prayer you all say together. Make up actions or learn to sign it e.g.
Thank you, Lord, you love us all,
And you hear us when we call.
Please be with us here today.
Help us in our work and play.
May we learn to love and care
Even when it's hard to share.

Take other opportunities to worship!

Once a week, put CW at snack time to develop an understanding of 'thanking God'. Saying thank you for food and eating together reflects practice in many schools and resonates with the saying of 'grace' in many religious homes.

Light a candle. Say a snack prayer. Do a circle of thanks for all sorts of other things while children are eating! Invite them to add something to a thank you basket (unifix cube, picture, small shell) to represent their thank you. Put the basket by the candle. Say a loud thank you God and gather all the thank you's together in a thank you God song', followed by a round of applause.

RESOURCES

Here are some useful resources but we also recommend you scour Christian bookshops for good materials to use with young children.

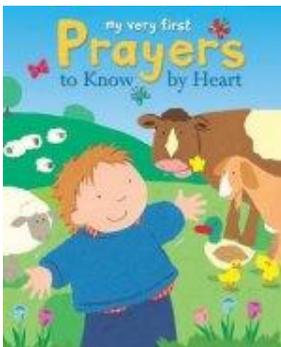
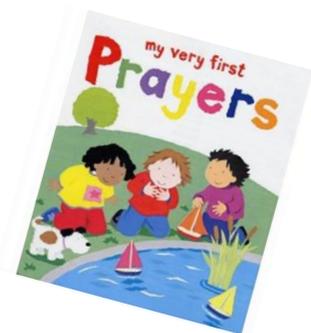
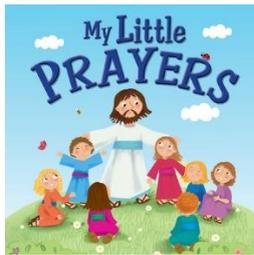
Jack in the Box (<http://www.imaginer.co.uk/jack-box-worship/>)

This resource, based on 'Values for Life', provides a simple and easy to use structure for use in Reception with nursery rhyme tunes to simple songs.

The teacher unpacks the worship objects – candle, cross, children's Bible - from a bright box along with a coloured drape, reflecting the church's season, and objects that reflect the theme/ story. The children join in a simple liturgy that begins the worship, the theme is introduced and followed by a short story and closing prayer. 'Jack' is a simple puppet dog!



Examples of how to use are shown in video format on the website. One assembly is available for download.



Lion Hudson has an extensive catalogue which you can be viewed online.

<http://www.lionhudson.com/> They also own the 'CANDLE' imprint with more good titles.

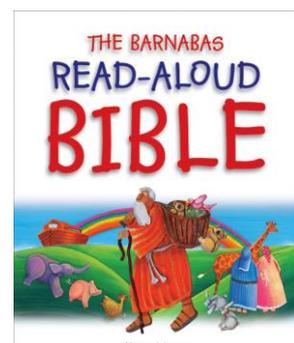
'My Very First Prayers' are always popular. A selection of prayers and reflections which children could learn by heart. ISBN 9780745962733

The Lion Book of Two Minute Parables: A series of punchy easy to read Bible story books, great for this age. ISBN: 9780745962016



BRF, under their Barnabas imprint, publish some good children's Bibles. <http://www.brfoonline.org.uk/bible/>

This 'Read Aloud' Bible is intended as a bedtime story Bible and provides a short story for every day of the yearbut it also provides just enough for CW time in school.





DIOCESAN COLLECTIVE WORSHIP FRAMEWORK

A structure for class worship in the Foundation Stage (15 minutes)

Using a structure of this kind means that the pupils contribute to planning their own worship. It also mirrors the structure used in whole school collective worship included in the Diocesan framework.

Gather	Engage	Respond	Send
<p>Make a set of picture cards from which the pupils can choose how they mark their gathering which might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Light a candle' 'Play some music' 'Ring bells gently' 'Sing a worship song' 'Put a special worship picture on our whiteboard' 	<p>Choose appropriate story material A story from a Children's Bible A story with a Christian message</p> <p>Apply the Christian message to the pupils' own lives and experiences</p> <p>Make sure you engage pupils in Looking (V) Listening (A) Doing (K)</p>	<p>Provide some time for prayer and/or reflection.</p> <p>Use a book of simple prayers for young pupils or use a prayer cube.</p> <p>You may want pupils to recite a simple prayer with or after you</p> <p>Encourage pupils to look at visual focus (an object or a picture) to help them to think about how they could respond to what they have heard today</p> <p>There may be people or situations for which the pupils want to pray</p> <p>Pupils could make a prayer wall of their prayer pictures or use an interactive prayer station within the classroom</p>	<p>Sending cards might include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Give someone a hug' 'Smile at someone' 'Help someone today' 'Play with someone you do not normally play with' 'Try something new today' 'Say something nice about someone'

Church Schools East produce **'Flippin' Praise'**, a simple planning tool for Collective Worship, involving four elements: Gather, Engage, Respond, Send.

Rochester diocese has adapted this for Reception children.