



Working On Worship (19)

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

The Trinity

For Christians God is experienced in three ways as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The creeds, said regularly in Anglican worship by the congregation, include the statements:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty....

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord

I believe in the Holy Spirit



Each statement refers to one of the three 'persons' of the Trinity (tri-unity or the three-in-one) and sets out how the first Christians came to understand God and the beliefs they subscribe to today.

The Trinity and Christian collective worship in schools



The Schedule for the inspection of Anglican and Methodist church schools (2013) says that when judging Collective Worship, inspectors **MUST** evaluate how well collective worship enables **pupils and adults to develop their understanding of the Christian belief in the trinitarian nature of God and its language.**

Why has this been included in the schedule? It highlights the fact that Christian worship naturally includes reference to each member of the Trinity (*Father, Son and Holy Spirit) at different points. In schools this is often not

the case; sometimes what is seen as a safer course of using only the generic name 'God' has become the norm.

There is a clear move in the inspection schedule to restore the Trinitarian flavour of Christian worship but it is also important to remember that there is an emphasis on 'age appropriateness'; this leaves inspectors to use their professional judgement to assess pupils' awareness of the Trinity in interviews and get a general sense of the place it occupies in worship without being too zealous in plumbing the depth of understanding what is clearly a vast and mysterious Christian doctrine.



However, it would obviously be unsatisfactory for a Christian school to avoid all mention of the persons of the Trinity, and helpful for all schools to find simple ways to ensure the pupils are introduced to the idea of Trinity naturally through songs, prayers and symbols.

Where might references to the Trinity occur in worship?

Thinking of the four sections used in many schools to help plan worship can help show where mention of the Trinity or members of the Trinity could occur i.e.

Gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the words of the greeting or an opening prayer • when using 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'
Engaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in Bible stories that refer to God the Father, Jesus the son or the Holy Spirit • when learning new songs or prayers which mention the members of the Trinity
Responding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when singing about, or to, members of the Trinity • when using 'in Jesus' name' at the end of prayers
Sending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when using dismissals which refer to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit or a phrase such as 'Send us out in the power of your Spirit' • when saying the Grace together at the end of worship • when a blessing is said or sung e.g. by visiting clergy

Raising the Trinitarian profile in your school

1. Create / display a Trinity symbol in school e.g. a collage of a triquetra, a mural of Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity.
2. Use symbols for each person of the Trinity on your worship table and



refer to them regularly.

3. Seize opportunities to refer to the idea of Trinity but also teach lessons about the Trinity in RE in both KS1 and KS2
4. Use some Trinitarian greetings, responses or prayers.
5. Ask the vicar to give a blessing during worship regularly so those gathered also hear the Trinitarian words of the blessing.
6. See if someone local can tell the Godly Play story of the church's year with its reference to the 'great green growing season' of the church's year i.e. Trinity.
7. In a prayer corner, place some material for plaiting with the words of the Grace next to it. Children can be encouraged to plait the material and say the Grace at the same time. Or some Celtic prayers with a Trinitarian form e.g. those of David Adams.



Look at your prayers (with thanks to Martin Andrews) e.g.

The regular use of the words of the Grace in worship as one of your formal prayers/ responses – of all prayers it is particularly Trinitarian in its content. The words should be explained to pupils not just recited so they have a sense of the work of each member of the Trinity. Perhaps as follows.....

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen

- *An awareness what it means to have God as Father – celebrating his love, his creation etc.*
- *An awareness of how God shows his grace (kindness and generosity) through Jesus His Son – the One who demonstrates God's love to the world and who is God 's way of bringing us forgiveness*
- *An awareness of how God works in our lives through the Holy Spirit e.g. as 'the One who comes alongside us'.*

The use in prayer of the phrase 'in the name of Jesus', having explained that this is something Jesus taught his followers to do. This is often omitted from prayers in collective worship

...in Jesus' name, Amen

Using prayers which address / refer to different members of the Trinity.

Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.....

Check your songs

- Audit your current range of songs to see whether any make reference to the different persons of the Trinity i.e. to God as Father, Son (Jesus) or Holy Spirit.
- Use www.worshipworkshop.org to find some hymns with a Trinitarian flavour e.g. We believe in God the Father. Some hymns have three verses – one for each person of the Trinity e.g. Father, Lord of all Creation.

- Use hymns or songs as a focus activity in RE to explore Christian worship / belief in God as Trinity. There are some songs for children which try to describe the Trinity – not all brilliant, but it is worth a search.

Try 'Out of the Box' – KS1 worship from Imaginor

In this resource, children prepare worship in their classroom by placing three symbols (Bible, cross and candle) which represent the Trinity on a liturgically appropriate coloured cloth. As each is placed, set words are used:

Leader: We take out the Bible and open it as we think about

Children: *God the Father, who teaches us through His word*

Leader: We take out the cross and put it in the centre as we think about

Children: *God's Son, Jesus, who loves us*

Leader: We take out the candle and light it as we think about

Children: *God the Holy Spirit, who guides us*

Check this resource out at: www.imaginer.co.uk/box-worship/

This model could be adapted to whole school worship, using three symbols to represent Father, Son and Holy Spirit either on or behind your worship table.

Use the Messy Church 'Grace'

A new, popular way of working with children and families in church, 'Messy Church' uses the words of the Grace as its central prayer. It is said with actions and in some church schools would be highly appropriate:



May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (hold out hands to receive)

And the love of God (cross arms on chest)

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (hold hands with neighbours)

Be with us all, evermore. Amen (raise hands in the air together)

Introduce Blessings

When local clergy are present they may be happy to conclude worship by offering all present a blessing. This may involve a Trinitarian formula. Children may be given the opportunity to look at a number of three-fold blessings in their RE lessons and write their own for use in Collective Worship.

Blessings can also be sung e.g. **Now go in peace; now go in love** (Michael Mair). This simple Trinitarian blessing song, set to a Caribbean folk melody, can be sung as a round.