

RE with collective worship materials For HARVEST

Schools enjoy celebrating Harvest Festival, but sometimes it is difficult to think of different approaches to the act of collective worship, to avoid repetition of the same materials each year. Below are four different suggestions to begin your thinking on this subject. Some suggestions include RE work to be done in preparation for the collective worship, and these have generally been designed for KS2.

(1) The Variety of Creation

A key theme of Harvest is to say thank you to God for the safe gathering in of the crops, and the beauty of the created world. Many of our children (and adults) are now totally divorced from the rhythm of the seasons and the true concept of harvest, as seasonal crops may be flown into our country from other parts of the world, and most food comes pre-packaged bearing little resemblance to its original natural components. However, the variety and beauty of the created world is still on our doorsteps, and brought to our attention through a variety of media, and it is for this that we may say thank you to God.

RE Preparations in the Classroom

In RE pupils should first engage with the Biblical story of Creation (see elsewhere in this booklet) and go on to consider how the world is not simply built for survival, but contains a rich variety of beautiful, intricate and amazing plants and creatures. Consider together ways in which this can best be demonstrated and talked about in an act of collective worship. You may like to use one, or several, of the following ideas:

- Make a Creation alphabet frieze together using plants, animals, birds and people. Find one interesting sentence to say about each chosen creature.
- Consider as a class the idea of stewardship and people's responsibility for the planet. What would the world be like if we failed in our duty and various species died out? (You may wish here to look at species which are actually in danger, or to tell the story of e.g. the dodo to show this is not just an hypothetical question.) Pupils may then choose a particular creature they like, and imagine these die out in their own generation. They should write a letter to their own grandchildren, to try to explain what has been lost and why. What could have been done to prevent this?
- Look at the variety of colours in nature – how many different shades of green are there in your local environment? How many different colours

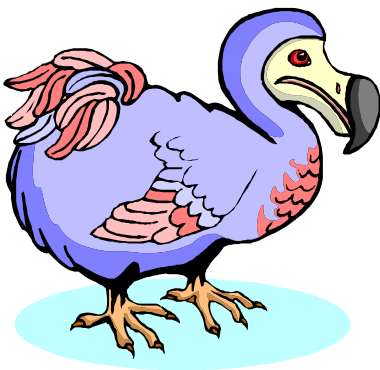
of flower? Bring in examples to share. Compare these with paint shade cards or swatches of material – where is there the greatest variety – in the natural or in the manmade?

- Use a story such as “The Day it Rained in Colours” (Roy Etherton. Lion. ISBN 0745922333), with its tale of the transformation of Greyland into the Land of Colour, or the hymn “Think of a world without any flowers” (Come and Praise Book 1 no. 17) to focus work on the beauty of Creation and the awfulness of loss.

The Harvest Assembly

The materials prepared in the classroom form the central focus of the Harvest Assembly. If you are not having the customary display of Harvest gifts, the worship leader will need to bring in a variety of food items from their store cupboard – representing as many countries and different types of food as possible. (You may wish to bring these in, in any case, to be certain you have sufficient variety for the talk.)

- The act of worship needs to begin with an introduction indicating that pupils have been investigating the rich variety of things in the created world, and the classroom RE work can then be shared.
- The worship leader may then use items from the harvest display to show how we benefit from the great variety of foodstuffs that are available to us, and brought into this county from throughout the world. How boring life would be if it was all bread and water!
- The concluding prayer(s) may pick up the themes of natural beauty and thankfulness to God for the many harvests from which we benefit. You may also wish to pray for the needs of those who have poor harvests, or, in some cases, whose harvests have been taken from them so that we can benefit.



(2) Are you feeling well Mother Earth?

For this assembly you will need the dramatic talents of several children: one to represent Mother Earth and the others to be medical specialists. Earth should, at very least, be holding a large globe, if you can dress them as a globe this will be even better. The others should look as “doctorish” as possible. The diagnosis should obviously be accompanied by a suitable mime testing out and examining the patient.

The Harvest Assembly

Begin by asking the children how they feel if they have made something beautiful, and which they are proud of, and then someone else has spoilt it.

Tell very briefly the Bible story of Creation and how beautiful everything was, and how pleased God was with it.

Introduce “Mother Earth”. Tell the children she is now about 4,600,000 years old and beginning to feel very unwell. The expert doctors are going to look at her symptoms and see if they can diagnose what the problem is.

Doctor 1 – I am a weight loss specialist. I can see that this poor lady has lost a lot of weight. People have been digging all kinds of things up out of her – coal and oil and gas – and burnt it all away.

Doctor 2 – You are right, and because of that her temperature is going up and up. This is making awful things happen all over her skin – storms and floods and droughts, and the sea levels are rising. I think we need to bring her temperature down before she develops a terrible fever.

Doctor 3 – Listen to her dreadful breathing, her lungs are in a very bad state. This is because people are chopping down so many trees all over the world. If there are fewer trees to release oxygen into the air then the air will become foul and breathing difficult.

Doctor 4 – Yes, and she has really bad breath too! It’s where people are polluting the air with their chemical factories. It smells rank!

Doctor 5 – It’s not just the smell though – that pollution is making her ozone skin all thin and cracked, it’s developing holes! This will mean that living creatures on the earth are going to start suffering soon.

Leader – So what is your diagnosis of the problem?

Doctor 1 – The patient has cancer.

Doctor 2 – I’m sorry to say that we, the people of the earth, have deliberately caused the cancer.

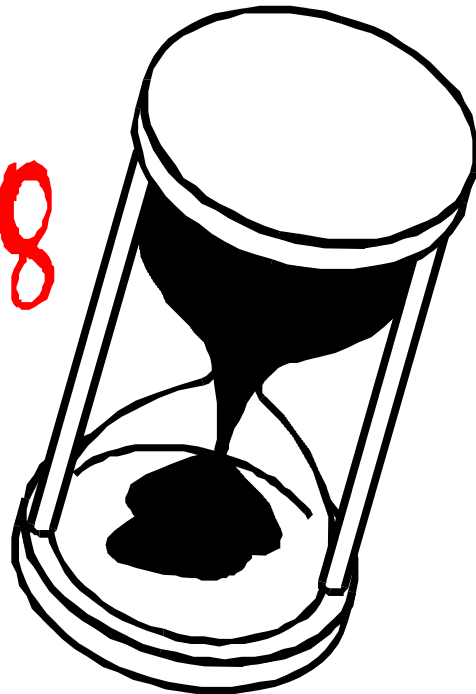
Doctor 3 – We are all worried that if something is not done soon, the patient will die.

(You may need to reassure pupils that the patient is not going to die straight away)

Conclude the assembly by sharing some of the things the school is doing to help the patient recover – this could be led by **members of the school's Eco Council** if you have one in place. Talk together about what we can all do to care for the earth.

Finish with a prayer of thanks for the beautiful world God has created and pray that people will be able to look after it better than they have been doing.

Time is
Running
Out



(3) The Ancient Spirit of Harvest

This harvest suggestion is based on some of the ancient traditions of English harvests.

Background

There are many different books around which will give you information about **traditional harvest customs in England**, and corn dollies may be easily found at craft fairs. (The word “dolly” simply means effigy and the dolly does not have to be person shaped – it is more usually a wreath, a crown, or some other geometric shape.) Is it possible to bring some corn dollies in, or for children to make examples using craft straws? One class might like to research some of these customs and present them to the rest of the school.

One ancient harvest figure, sometimes confused with the scarecrow, is the grandfather (and / or grandmother) of the harvest . “Grandfather” was made from the stalks of harvested grain which were kept for the seed sowing the next spring. The effigy would be treated with all the care and love that people would give to their real grandparents. “He” would be brought into the home, placed somewhere dry and safe, kept free from vermin and watched over carefully throughout the winter to be sure all was well. If “grandfather harvest died”, then many other people would die too, because he stored in his body the seed which was needed for next year’s harvest. No seed, no harvest – and starvation followed.

At harvest time people would often hang a wreath (a crown) of grain on their farmhouse door. It was a sign that the harvest was taking place, and that any travellers who came and helped the farmer with his harvest would be welcomed and looked after and fed.

Preparation

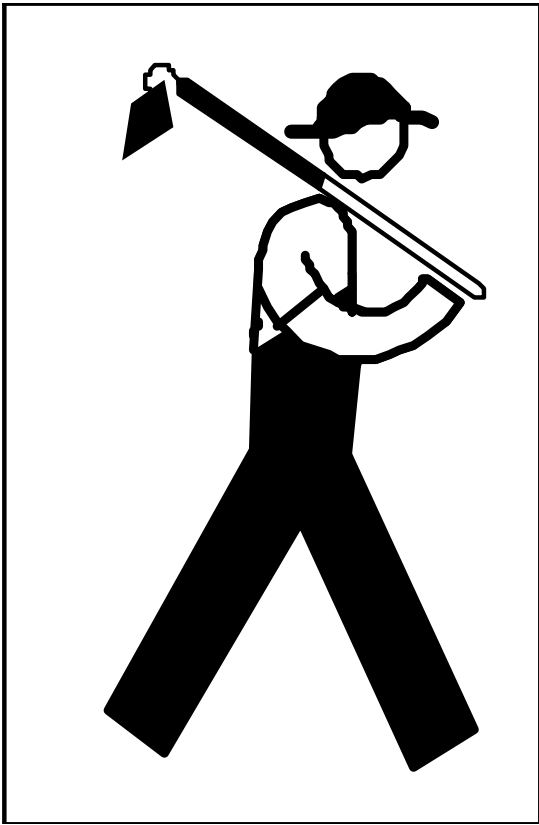
For this assembly it would be good to have available at least some corn dollies, but, better still, can a class make a grandfather harvest (a scarecrow or guy with a few ears of wheat attached would fit the purpose)?

Have some seeds available to distribute for autumn or spring planting.

The Assembly

Share with the children some of the harvest customs mentioned above, as appropriate. There are several important Christian teaching points that you can include:

- These are customs which come from a time when many of our ancestors worked on the land, and for them harvest was really important and could mean the difference between living and dying. Nowadays in Britain this is no longer true, but for poorer people in many countries around the world a failed harvest can be a total disaster. (This may be linked to any international need of which you are aware.)



- As well as being a way of storing grain (!), grandfather harvest was a symbol of God's generosity and care. He was treated with respect and affection as a sign of thanks to God for the harvest that had taken place.
- At times of harvest and plenty, people would make sure that they shared with others who were less well off, following the Christian teachings that we are all God's children together, and that those who receive great gifts from God are expected to do more as well.

Each harvest is both a looking backward and a looking forward time. You look backward to the time of growing, and forward to next year's planting. This can also be a time, at the beginning of a new school year, to look forward too to this year's educational growth! Remind the children how they are all growing, just as seeds flourish and grow, and distribute packets of seeds to each class as a reminder of this. *(Do make sure they are planted out when the time is right, and looked after too!)*

Pray to give thanks for all those who work hard that we might enjoy the harvests of the world. If there are any particular issues in the farming community of which you are aware (either here or abroad), then include these in your prayers. Pray that we too may grow and be a "good harvest".