

# Windows into Worship

What is worship? In the school context one immediately begins to think of collective worship and standard definitions such as “giving worth to....” spring to mind. This always seems a very grudging description of worship when compared to the many different ways in which Christians can worship God, and the effect this has upon their lives; worship is something to explore and experience, rather than something to write pages of notes on!

First of all worship is relational, it is not practised in a vacuum. Christians, understanding themselves to be in a close relationship with God, are in close communication with him through prayer and worship. Worship explores the relationship between God and humankind – much of worship could be described as “adoration” as believers respond to the power and majesty of God through words, ritual, liturgy, drama and dance. Worship is also a time for “sharing the news” when Christians learn more about God through the Bible, prayers, hymns and statements of faith related in many different ways. Although most people think of worship as a group activity, this is not necessarily the case; a person may be moved to worship God, for example, on a walk in the hills as a response to a natural phenomenon. In fact, in many ways Christians view their whole lives as an act of worship – because they should be living in such a way that their lives mirror their beliefs, and are a way of saying “thank you” to God for all that He is and does.

Prayer is an important component of worship because it is the way of communicating with God. Christians do not see prayer as a bargaining with God (although sometimes you can hear prayers which sound just like that!), rather it is a sharing of needs, a confession of wrongdoing or an outburst of praise. At times prayer can be wordless and silent – a sitting with God as one would do with a good friend. Although formal worship will usually contain formal and set prayers, all services leave space for intercessions when people can bring to God the concerns of the moment. Most Christians will pray when on their own or in small groups, as well as in formal services, after all you don’t keep a friendship alive by meeting occasionally in large crowds! There is no one type of prayer, and Christians may use tools such as rosary beads or icons to help them focus their prayer.

For Christians there are several special rites of passage, or services, these are known as “sacraments” and stand as a sign for the nature of the Christian’s relationship with God. A sacrament always includes some outward, visible, ritual sign, which demonstrates an invisible, spiritual, truth or teaching ( e.g. in baptism the outward sign of pouring water over a person symbolises the washing away of their sins and their becoming a new person in God). Most Christian churches practise the two major sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist (Holy Communion, Mass) because these were initiated by Jesus himself. Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox Churches accept seven sacraments; Baptism, Eucharist, Holy Matrimony, Confirmation, Ordination, the Anointing of the Sick, and Reconciliation (often associated with the dying and then called Extreme Unction). In this booklet we shall look only at baptism, weddings, funerals, and the Eucharist.

In this collection of schemes we have attempted to write materials which give pupils something of the experience of what it is like to worship. This has to be carefully handled in the RE classroom as, of course, nobody child or adult, should be placed in a position where they think someone is forcing them to worship God or to make a faith statement, as this is entirely inappropriate in a curriculum context. Pupils will also have experienced collective worship in the school context, but collective worship is in essence different to the corporate worship of the Church, where a body of *believers* join together to worship God.

The “Shirley and Penny team” has recently produced materials on teaching Christianity which also include other schemes of work based on worship or rites of passage. We have not repeated the same materials here, but would recommend that you look back at our earlier volumes on teaching Christian Festivals, and teaching about the Church for these. If you do not have a hard copy available you will find a downloadable version at [www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools](http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools) see especially:

**From “Teaching Christian Festivals Part 2”:**

- Pg 16 on Maundy Thursday and Holy Communion
- Several of the Easter schemes look at the symbolism of the cross

**From “A Church Pick and Mix Book”:**

- The specially designed church trail cards at the back of the book contain references to various Christian symbols and items used in worship, including the font
- “The Church as Sacred Space” for Y1/2 looks at the church being used for worship
- “The church as pilgrimage centre” includes writing a service of thanksgiving
- “A church audit” looks at the artefacts used in worship
- There is a scheme on the Lord’s Prayer for KS2
- “Christianity as a world faith” includes worship elements from other countries
- “The church as community centre” includes a look at marriage for KS1
- “A community which comes together to worship” looks at worship in general terms
- See also “Joining the church –baptism” for KS1

### **Websites with worship information:**

[www.cofe.anglican.org/worship](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship) has a lot of useful material. The section on “learn to pray” explains at a basic level about prayer while the “liturgy” section will allow you to download an entire service sheet, so you can print off e.g. a service of baptism and the accompanying notes, without having to borrow piles of service booklets from your local church.

[www.devon.gov.uk/dcs/re/places/index.html](http://www.devon.gov.uk/dcs/re/places/index.html) an interesting and unusual site about places of worship in the home with a number of Christian examples.

[www.request.org.uk/main/dowhat/worship/worship01.htm](http://www.request.org.uk/main/dowhat/worship/worship01.htm) has plenty of information about Christian worship, with worship and art at [www.request.org.uk/main/dowhat/art/art01.htm](http://www.request.org.uk/main/dowhat/art/art01.htm) and even more on baptism at [www.request.org.uk/main/dowhat/baptism/baptism.htm](http://www.request.org.uk/main/dowhat/baptism/baptism.htm) and [www.request.org.uk/main/dowhat/baptism/believers\\_baptism\\_01.htm](http://www.request.org.uk/main/dowhat/baptism/believers_baptism_01.htm) - including videos. [www.request.org.uk/main/dowhat/music/music01.htm](http://www.request.org.uk/main/dowhat/music/music01.htm) has music in worship. All these are written at KS2 level.

Educhurch looks at worship in Anglican and Methodist churches, and a Salvation Army Citadel, as well as having a section on prayer, see [www.educhurch.org.uk/pupils/themes/events.htm](http://www.educhurch.org.uk/pupils/themes/events.htm) This is also written at primary level. These pages have accompanying teachers' notes and video clips, [www.educhurch.org.uk/teachers/worship.html](http://www.educhurch.org.uk/teachers/worship.html)

If you are looking for Christian music then it is worth visiting the Taize site where there are 9 songs (and the community bells) on line, plus the words and music scores for a number of the most famous Taize chants [http://www.taize.fr/en\\_article681.html](http://www.taize.fr/en_article681.html) The site also has useful articles on subjects such as the use of silence and icons in prayer (written at adult level) [http://www.taize.fr/en\\_rubrique12.html](http://www.taize.fr/en_rubrique12.html)

For a brief summary on religious topics it is often worth consulting the BBC: [www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/worship/index.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/worship/index.shtml) And finally, if you are interested in Byzantine icons try [www.csg-i.com/icons/](http://www.csg-i.com/icons/) which includes two large examples of icons to study as well as information about the importance of icons in the Orthodox Church.