

## Collective Worship in Church Schools

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What is collective worship?

**Christian** worship is an honouring of God. It acknowledges His transcendence and Holiness, (His "worth" and "value") it is a loving response to His nature as revealed in Jesus Christ. Worship stems from personal experience; it is a central characteristic of faith communities which are in relationship with God. We can never make anyone worship because it is an attitude of the heart focused on God; in the school situation "all" we can do is lead people to the threshold of worship by providing a setting where they may worship God if they so wish.

**Collective** worship only takes place in schools. It is a term which is used only in education, whereas churches and religions usually think of their worship as being corporate. The implication of this is that when a group of people gather together due to shared beliefs with the intention of sharing worship then this is a **corporate** activity. No such assumptions about shared beliefs can be made in the case of a school community, even a church school. The school is a collection of people who come from a variety of backgrounds and who happen to be together primarily for the purpose of education, not for worship. The family backgrounds of pupils may be very different in terms of beliefs and adherence to religion, from the atheist, secular humanist to a devout background of a faith, either Christian or another world religion. Where parents have choice about which school their child attends, this is often limited by geographical factors and the church school still cannot claim the right to use school collective worship as an act of corporate worship. What takes place in collective worship must take account of the varied backgrounds of the pupils (and staff) as well as of their ages and aptitudes.

In collective worship children and adults will be responding to the worship on offer in different ways and at different levels; some will be passive observers, learning about worship but not participating in it; some will be "at the threshold", interested in the process and participating in it but not full believers; for others the act of collective worship may be a time of real worship of God. It is the task of collective worship to provide a setting in which the integrity of those present is not compromised but in which everyone finds something positive for themselves.

Collective worship plays a central role in a Church School; it models the school's Christian ethos and values, and proclaims its Church School identity. As a result it should:

- Have a recognised place in key school documents such as the Statement of Aims or Statement of Purpose
- Be well organised, planned, delivered and resourced
- Be special and different from ordinary classroom activities, offering a sense of occasion
- Be both inclusive and unifying, recognising the personal integrity of all members of the school community
- Be real worship

**A fuller set of collective worship aims may be found in chapter 4.**

## Collective worship and the Law

Arrangements for collective worship in a church school are the responsibility of the governors in consultation with the Headteacher. There are three main legal requirements for collective worship:

- ➔ Collective worship in a church school should be carried out in accordance with the school's founding Trust Deed, and in accordance with the School's Ethos Statement, which is to be found in the statutory Instruments of Government.
- ➔ The school must provide an act of collective worship for all pupils every day. This act of worship can take place at any time of the school day and in any regular school grouping e.g. whole school, key stage or class unit.
- ➔ A statement must be included in the school brochure that makes it clear parents may withdraw their children from collective worship on religious grounds. A similar statement should appear in the collective worship policy document. (The "religious grounds" do not have to be justified and explained by the parents) Should children be withdrawn, the school must provide adequate supervision to ensure their safety. Staff who withdraw children from collective worship (e.g. remedial reading, music lessons) are breaking the law!

## The Anglican Tradition

When planning collective worship, Church Schools will want to be aware of their Anglican Foundation and consider how this can contribute to the assembly provision - without reproducing something inappropriate to the children's age and experience such as a version of KS1 Evensong!

The following may be described as shared Christian elements of collective worship:

- Using the Bible, either as a source book, or as an inspiration for themes and stories
- Observing the cycle of the Church's Year – Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Saints Days
- Learning and saying traditional prayers from a number of sources, in particular the Lord's Prayer and the Grace
- Singing a wide variety of hymns, from traditional to rap
- Using Christian symbols in worship and reflecting on their meaning e.g. cross, crucifix, bread and wine
- The use of prayer, silence and reflection
- Using Psalms with simple responses

Whilst these are more distinctively Anglican:

- Using prayers from Common Worship
- Using Anglican sentences and responses e.g.
  - The Lord is here / *His Spirit is with us*
  - Peace be with you/ *and also with you*
  - Go in peace to love and serve the Lord / *In the name of Christ, Amen*
- Using Collects as a focus for worship
- Eucharists
- Encouraging links with the worship of the local parish church

The Anglican Church is a worldwide church with a strong commitment to ecumenism, so Church of England schools should also feel free to draw upon appropriate materials from other Christian churches in their collective worship, as well as inviting visitors from other churches to lead collective worship on occasions.

## The Aims of Collective Worship

When planning collective worship in your School it is important to ask how the worship is related to the school's Mission Statement or Statement of Purpose. It is frequently stated that, by virtue of their foundation, worship in church schools should be of the highest quality and a central activity in the life of the school. Effective collective worship is one way in which a Church School can give expression to its founding Trust Deed.

Below are some of the accepted aims of collective worship in a Church School:

- To provide an opportunity for the children to reflect upon God and to give Him honour.
- To help children discover their place in the world.
- To highlight and nurture the spiritual dimension through experiencing worship.
- To provide children with a vocabulary of worship and an experience of a wide variety of worship forms, including symbols and imagery..
- To provide an opportunity to celebrate major, and some minor, Christian festivals.
- To heighten awareness of the ultimate questions / realities of life and to provide the opportunity to reflect upon these. To support the search for meaning.
- To enable children to appreciate their worth and value to God, and to the community, and to respect the integrity of all individuals as a child of God
- To enable pupils to make effective use of silence in opportunities for reflection, contemplation, meditation and prayer.
- To celebrate gifts, talents and achievements.
- To establish, explore, and reinforce the common Christian values of the school community such as love, peace, kindness, compassion.
- To foster a feeling of community and belonging in the school through a sharing of experiences and feelings.
- To develop personal relationships and to encourage social development.
- To provide an opportunity to empathise with the needs of others.
- To provide an opportunity for children to become acquainted with people from the local and wider community, particularly the local church.
- To encourage respect and care for God's creation by a positive attitude to both local and global environmental issues.
- To foster feelings such as awe, wonder, thankfulness, mystery and joy.
- To give memorable and enjoyable experiences.

- ➔ To provide an opportunity to bring before God in prayer personal needs and those of others.
- ➔ To share with participants some of the central teachings of the Christian faith at an appropriate level, and thereby give them the encouragement to explore their own beliefs and understanding of God within a Christian framework.

## The Collective Worship Policy

A Collective Worship Policy Statement should contain the information below.

- ◆ A statement about the **legal requirement for collective worship** (daily; legal entitlement of all children in the school; legal right of parents to withdraw children from worship; “in accordance with the founding Church of England Trust Deed and the Ethos Statement in the school’s Instruments of Government”.)
- ◆ The **Aims** of collective worship in the school, which could be linked with a statement about the character and nature of the school and its community. (see chapter 4 for examples of Aims)
- ◆ Details of how the school **plans** collective worship:
  - a) timing, groupings, venue, regular worship leaders,
  - b) those who are involved in planning collective worship - co-ordinator and? (e.g responsibilities and roles of foundation governors)
  - c) evidence of an effective pattern of themes planned in advance, and available to all staff and worship leaders
  - d) evidence of use of varying types of worship experiences (e.g. prayer, music, silence, Bible reading, story, dance, puppets etc)
  - e) methods of record keeping and evidence of daily records being kept
  - f) budget, resources and INSET
  - g) the way pupils are involved in collective worship
  - h) details of any curricular links ( note, although there will be links between collective worship and RE in particular, schools cannot legally count collective worship as curriculum time - the aim of the experiences are clearly different)
  - i) methods of evaluating the collective worship process.
  - j) If you make use of Visitors in collective worship it is important to have information about how these will be briefed/prepared for a visit to the school.
  - k) If pupils are withdrawn from collective worship, the policy should also include a statement explaining how the school will exercise its duty of supervision of such children.

### **Important questions for the school to ask about Collective Worship Plans and Records**

- ◆ What format of record keeping would be most supportive to monitoring and long term planning?
- ◆ How do we include other worship providers (e.g. local clergy, members of the parish) in the planning process?
- ◆ Do we have a suitable handout on collective worship in our school which could be given to occasional visitors?

## Ways of planning and recording collective worship

A school will need to establish both a Collective Worship Plan and a Worship Record. It is sensible to combine the two documents into one, by producing a form of weekly planning sheet which can be filled out in advance then amended or completed to form the worship record.

This form of record keeping has several advantages:

- It enables the collective worship co-ordinator to monitor continuity and progression as a worship theme unfolds. It also prevents undue repetition, when several worship providers wish to adopt the same story to illustrate a theme.
- Occasional worship providers, such as the clergy and regular visitors, who may not see other acts of worship underway, will understand how their assembly fits into the overall pattern of a theme.
- It will be easy to demonstrate that the School has provided daily collective worship according to its Anglican Trust Deed and Ethos Statement.
- Schools registered with the Christian Copyright Licensing Scheme will have a record of the hymns they have used.

A final section on evaluation or monitoring the collective worship will assist future planning. (This may be comments as simple as "story proved inappropriate for age range", or "difficult to maintain atmosphere due to noise from lawnmower" but schools should also consider other appropriate matters such as layout of room, briefing of visitors etc. under this heading.)

The most important thing to do is to find a method of record-keeping which is appropriate to your circumstances, manageable, and sustainable. Too much detail can make the whole system cumbersome and unworkable.

A collective worship planning grid normally has the following headings:

Date  
Theme  
Worship leader  
Content or main focus  
Resources used  
Music/ hymns  
Pupil participation  
Comment /evaluation

### **Evaluation**

A school should consider:

- ➔ Who is involved in the evaluation of collective worship. As well as teaching staff, this could include the pupils themselves, or members of the governing body.
- ➔ The frequency of evaluation – daily, weekly or half termly. It should be sufficiently frequent to impact upon future planning.

## Planning Issues

Collective worship should be a special occasion, valued by teachers and pupils alike. There are several issues which need to be considered as having a bearing upon the atmosphere of the worship. It is worth reviewing the school's current practice under these headings:

- **Venue** In most schools the choice of room for worship lies between the hall, or remaining in the classroom with smaller groups. With class-based worship, it is important that efforts are made to differentiate between the time for worship and the other activities of the classroom, perhaps by the use of a special collective worship corner or a particular layout of the classroom.
  
- **Preparing for worship** Whichever room is used for collective worship it is likely to be employed for other purposes. How does the school arrange the room to facilitate the movement into worship? The use of a focal point helps to draw pupils' attention. This may be a particular table, seat or screen. The object of attention may be something fixed such as a standing cross, flowers or a candle, or may vary according to the worship theme. Noticeboards in line with the focal point may be used for displays which will support and enhance the worship experience..
  
- **Seating** It is customary to seat pupils in classes, either in lines or in a horseshoe shape. Schools may like to experiment with allowing children to sit in friendship groups or in "family" groupings which cross the age ranges. This is best done by creating artificial families containing one child from each year group - older children taking responsibility for the younger ones. This arrangement has the advantage that Year 6 are not pushed to the back of the room where they are permanently distanced from the collective worship leader.
  
- **Attendance at Worship**
  - (i) **Pupils.** Parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship, otherwise all pupils should attend. Legally teachers **cannot** withdraw children from the worship for e.g. remedial work; a school which does so is failing to meet the requirements of the law. Parents should not be asked to withdraw their children on e.g. "Tuesdays only" for other activities, as the reason for a pupil's withdrawal from collective worship has to be "on religious grounds".
  
  - (ii) **Staff.** Staff cannot be compelled to attend collective worship and in some schools assembly is seen as non-contact time for the teachers. If this is the case in your school a number of questions need to be asked. If collective worship is seen as a valuable time for community building, then should not all members of the school community be present? Do you wish to give the impression that worship is something adults grow out of but subject children to? If your worship is an integral part of the school's life and connected with the curriculum should not all staff know what has been going on in assembly? How can collective worship be properly monitored and assessed if the worship provider is the only adult present? Is it right that only one adult should look after the whole school - what happens in an emergency? If teachers feel they need to withdraw from the collective worship on religious grounds is the school actually meeting the criterion that worship should be inclusive not exclusive?

- ➔ It is also good to involve the wider community in the life of the school. It is a positive step to invite parents, governors, local religious leaders, the School's ancillary staff and local people in general to join the school's collective worship on a regular basis. This strengthens the idea of worship as a unifying and cohesive force.

## Acts of Collective worship on-line

Nowadays there are so many resources on-line offering you collective worship solutions that you can almost plan an entire year's worth of assemblies surfing through the world wide web! These are the Diocesan Adviser's personal top ten sites at the moment:

- Of course, Ely Diocese first! Elsewhere on this site is a programme of collective worship suggestions based on the Sunday Bible Readings (lectionary) in Anglican churches. This is a three year cycle, and all three years are now in place. Obviously the ideas do not *have* to be used in the week they were written for (there is a thematic index), but if you do follow the programme as designed you will also be following the pattern of worship at your own parish church. [www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools](http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools) Additional acts of worship will be included on this site over time, and may be accessed through the thematic index.
- A near neighbour in Norwich Diocese, Janice Scott, the rector of Dickleburgh and Pulham, has also got a website of talks for children linked with the weekly lectionary (chiefly adaptations of Bible stories and Christian legends) see [www.sermons-stories.co.uk/stmkarchive.htm](http://www.sermons-stories.co.uk/stmkarchive.htm)
- [www.assemblies.org.uk](http://www.assemblies.org.uk) SPCK's collective worship site. SPCK has joined with the All Saints Educational Trust to provide a website which will include two new assemblies a week on a Christian theme. They also promise "rapid response assemblies" for world events which impinge on children's lives. The acts of worship are usually not date specific and helpfully include an indication of which key stage they are most suitable for.
- [www.culham.ac.uk](http://www.culham.ac.uk) offers regular collective worship ideas.
- Blackburn Diocese at [www.blackburn.anglican.org](http://www.blackburn.anglican.org) offers outline assembly themes with a strongly Biblical flavour. Follow the links to "collective school worship".
- The Church of Scotland Board of Parish Education offers talks for children particularly linked with the Christian year. This now includes a scripture index with over 160 entries.. [www.talks2children.itsforministry.org](http://www.talks2children.itsforministry.org)
- For collective worship with an environmental theme go to REEP at [www.reep.org/cw/](http://www.reep.org/cw/)
- The Hibbert Trust has materials for collective worship, PSE and RE at primary and secondary level. Their site includes hymns, prayers, worship and follow-up suggestions and a photograph to illustrate the theme. See [www.hibbert-assembly.org.uk/index.html](http://www.hibbert-assembly.org.uk/index.html)
- [www.prayingeachday.org/reflect.html](http://www.prayingeachday.org/reflect.html) The de la Salle brothers have a lovely site that includes a reflection and prayer for every day of the year. Some of these will be more appropriate for secondary school than primary, but others could readily be adapted to the primary phase or stimulate your thinking!

→ [www.schoolassemblies.btinternet.co.uk/scripcon.htm](http://www.schoolassemblies.btinternet.co.uk/scripcon.htm) has assembly scripts to download. Most of these literally are scripts, with reading parts for several children. This is a Roman Catholic site and also includes scripts for masses which may be of use to you if you are putting together a church service. The site is composed chiefly of assemblies that have been submitted by teachers, and that really worked!

## Asking Visitors to lead collective worship

Many schools appreciate the contribution that visitors can make to collective worship. They can enrich the school's collective worship experience, and offer opportunities for pupils to learn from others beyond the school community. Some may be regular visitors, such as the local incumbent or other Christian leaders; others may be occasional visitors, perhaps asked for a particular event. Whether regular or occasional, the visitor does need some help from the school about what is expected of them, and may need some guidance about how to approach a group of pupils of a particular age, and what are appropriate topics to use with them. Some guidelines for visitors need to be developed so that the school and the visitor can feel comfortable with the occasion and the possibility for inadvertent disaster is limited

When briefing visitors for school worship, make sure you tell them:

- who exactly will attend, whether it will be the whole school or a section of it, and if so, which section
- how long the speaker is expected to talk for
- the current assembly theme and context for the speaker - what has already been done and what will be done later in the term
- how pupils and staff are normally involved in collective worship
- what resources or hardware are available to them, should they so wish
- exactly how much their contribution will be - is it just the talk or will they be asked to choose the hymn and lead the prayers

and:

- give them plenty of notice - don't assume that a visitor who wears an RE or religious "hat" can produce an assembly at a few moments notice!
- invite them to attend an act of collective worship beforehand so that they may see how the school conducts them, or, if this is not practical, lend them a copy of the collective worship policy document
- some visitors may also need to be told that collective worship is not an appropriate vehicle for hard sell evangelism, and that inclusive language ("we all believe...") is to be avoided

Visitors who are regularly involved in collective worship should appreciate sensitive feedback on the appropriateness of their contribution to the school assembly programme.

**Chapter 10 of this document may be printed off and adapted as a handout to be given to a visiting collective worship leader.**

And finally.... NEVER leave a visiting speaker to take an act of collective worship alone, it is bad manners, bad educational practice, and bad churchmanship!



## **A Few Dos and Don'ts for those asked to lead collective worship**

### **DO**

#### **Do find out**

- who will attend the collective worship - the whole school, or just part of it
- how long you are allowed to speak for (and don't over run)
- which theme the school is presently following in collective worship , what they have done already and will do in the rest of the term
- whether pupils and staff are used to being involved in activities, should you wish them to be so

**Do prepare thoroughly** - a ten minute presentation which addresses the needs and variety of backgrounds of pupils has to be carefully thought out, and should always begin by making a real connection with the children's world.

**Do help pupils** by allowing them time for silence in which they may think, reflect and respond at their own level

**Do remember** the difference between collective and corporate worship. A school assembly is not the appropriate venue for strong evangelism.

**Do adopt** a variety of approaches in each act of worship or within each series of acts. Introduce them on a variety of occasions to the breadth of Christian experiences and practices.

### **DON'T**

#### **Don't**

- talk too much
- forget that pupils are used to a variety of learning styles
- talk down to them
- merely entertain them
- talk over their heads

**Don't assume** that pupils' presence at worship signifies their personal commitment or involvement. You should not impose on pupils words or attitudes which they cannot honestly express. Your task is not to compel worship, but to enable it.

**Don't conduct** an act of worship without visiting the school first. Arrange to meet the Head for a discussion of the school's policy and procedures, and if possible, be present at an act of worship in the school.

## **Collective Worship and Assembly - Are they the Same?**

It is still customary in the majority of schools for teachers and pupils alike to use the term "assembly" when they are referring to the "act of collective worship". This accepted shorthand should not be allowed to blind us to the differences between the two activities. Schools frequently **assemble** for a common purpose. There may be a visiting theatre company in school, or the need to give out important notices or deal with matters of common concern; not every assembly is an act of collective worship.

In essence the purpose of most school assemblies is to gather the school for collective worship followed by the sharing of notices. In this scenario, pupils withdrawn from collective worship should rejoin the rest of the school for the assembly notices.

There are many elements which worship and assembly have in common, such as helping children to develop common standards and values, or to develop an awareness of, and a concern for, the needs of others. However, the presence of these common elements alone does not turn an assembly into an act of collective worship. It is a mistake to assume that, for example, inviting a charity worker to address the school during the "collective worship slot" **is** collective worship. In each and every act of collective worship some of the elements of worship (i.e. of "giving worth to God") must be present.

***An Assembly may include Collective Worship. Not every Assembly is Collective Worship.***

## **Themes and Schemes: some examples**

Most Church School collective worship cycles are based on the Christian Year.

Each Christian festival invites the use of particular collective worship themes, these include:

### **Autumn Term**

#### **→ Beginnings**

- New friends, new starts, new hope
- Welcoming, community, belonging
- Initiation ceremonies
- Rules of this school & rules of life
- Rules to live by – the 10 commandments and the two great commandments

#### **→ Harvest**

- Environment, stewardship, conservation
- Earth, land, sea, Creation
- Bread, Bread of Life
- Celebration, thankfulness, sharing, caring
- Third World need. Famine, drought.
- Talents & achievements, lifestyles, hopes, thankfulness

#### **→ St Luke (18<sup>th</sup> October), Medicine**

- Healing, healing miracles of Jesus
- Disability
- Famous people connected with medicine
- Service, working and caring for others

#### **→ People of Faiths, Saints**

- Patronal saint of parish church
- All Saints, All Souls
- Biblical heroes and heroines
- Today's heroes
- Christians today, famous and local

#### **→ Remembering**

- War and peace
- Remembrance Sunday
- Older people
- Eucharist
- Sadness and loss
- Personal heroes
- Older people
- Special memories

#### **→ Advent**

- New church year
- Preparation, anticipation, hope, waiting
- The meaning of the candles of the Advent wreath

- Light
- Customs

#### → Christmas

- The Christmas story
- Customs & traditions
- Christmas in other lands
- Incarnation
- Light of the World
- Love, joy peace, hope
- Gifts and giving
- Families and relationships
- Refugees and homelessness
- Poverty
- Messengers
- Carols

### Spring Term

#### → New Year

- New beginnings
- Fresh start
- Resolutions
- Anticipation
- New life, seasons, Spring

#### → Epiphany

- Gifts and gift bringers
- Thankfulness
- Journeys
- Dedication, baptism, names

#### → Candlemas

- The Light of the World, light
- Initiation
- Babies, dedication, hope

#### → Lent & Holy Week

- Growth – mental, physical, spiritual
- Special days – Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday
- Fasting, abstinences, self control, giving-up
- Spiritual spring cleaning
- Pilgrimage, spiritual journey
- Temptation, penitence, saying sorry
- Conversion of St Paul
- Forgiveness
- Foot washing, service to others
- Last Supper, Eucharist

- Rejection, loneliness, separation

→ Easter

- The Easter story
- Joy, hope, love
- New life, new beginnings
- Surprise, triumph, promises, evil, suffering, pain, sacrifice
- Friendship
- Repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, salvation
- Customs – cards, food, gardens, eggs

**Summer Term**

→ Rogation

- Community – school, parish, world
- Establishing boundaries,
- Homes
- Creation, caring for the earth

→ Ascension

- Kingship
- Authority
- Symbolism, imagery
- Saying goodbye

→ Pentecost

- Holy Spirit
- Trinity
- Fruits of the Spirit
- Baptism, confirmation
- Power
- Birthday gifts
- Customs
- Fire
- Wind

The end of the year – moving on

- Pilgrimage
- Saying thank you
- Explorers, discoveries
- Trust, promises, worry, bravery
- Surprises and disappointments
- Confidence, assurance, prepared
- New class, new school
- Jesus as the Way, the Truth & the Life (“I Am” sayings)
- Memories, learning
- Journey of life
- The Unknown

The Christian Festivals obviously return annually, but what of the rest of the worship cycle? There are many other appropriate worship themes which may be considered but which could be happily used at almost any time of year e.g.

Bible heroes  
Bible heroines  
A Bible story - Joseph, Ruth, Paul.  
Achievements  
Barriers and Bridges  
Communication  
Prayer  
The Lord's Prayer  
Famous Prayers  
Famous Hymns  
Ourselves  
Forgiveness  
Friends and Neighbours  
I Believe  
Loneliness  
Loss  
Bullying  
Prejudice  
Parables  
Stories of Jesus/stories by Jesus/sayings of Jesus  
Creation/Nature/Environment  
Peace  
The Church (building and people)  
The Gifts of the Spirit  
Making Promises  
Signs and Symbols  
The Senses  
Special Books  
Saying sorry  
People who have influenced us  
We can help  
Different charities  
Making Decisions  
Celebrating Differences  
Growth  
Love is ...  
In the news  
Disability  
Home and Family  
Time  
Awe and wonder  
Music  
Art  
Challenging  
Choice  
Freedom and responsibility  
Special Things  
What's it worth?  
Why are we here?  
Age

Silence and Reflection  
Messages  
Celebration  
Searching  
Poetry  
Names and Titles of Jesus  
Animals  
Science  
War and Peace  
Ideas about God  
Food

There is almost nothing which, rightly handled, cannot be a stimulus for Christian-centred collective worship, it has been described in this way:

Think Trinitarian:

- (1) God is creator, all Creation is therefore the rightful concern of a Christian.
  - (2) Jesus became incarnate. All aspects of human life are encompassed here.
  - (3) The Holy Spirit teaches us to foster the spiritual and personal side of our life.
- The whole of our experience thus becomes the springboard for our worship.

**One route towards planning your collective worship cycle is as follows:**

- 1) Set out each term of the cycle on an individual piece of paper.
- 2) Fill in all the major Christian festivals the school will celebrate and estimate the time these will take up as worship themes.
- 3) Establish where the gaps in provision lie and select themes or topics to fill these as appropriate for your school.
- 4) Circulate the agreed list to all worship providers.
- 5) Hold regular planning meetings for all worship providers (once per half-term or term). Brainstorm each theme together. This gives the opportunity to pool and share resources and to establish that there is continuity (and no repetition!) over the theme.
- 6) Post a summary of the contents of the worship theme in advance on the staffroom noticeboard. This will enable all staff to consider whether they wish to link the collective worship theme to their curriculum work.
- 7) Post a weekly assembly list on the noticeboard, outlining each individual act of collective worship (leader, story, music).





## Bible Stories and Collective Worship Themes

Most schools like to organise their acts of collective worship in a series of weekly or fortnightly themes. Below is a table of such themes with a smattering of possible Bible story connections. You will find some Bible stories appear several times under different headings; which helps to demonstrate the breadth of each story. This is not intended to be a definitive list and the headings are fairly arbitrary (!). As the list is confined solely to stories; we would recommend the use of a good Biblical concordance if you are looking for all the teaching on a particular theme. We have put the Bible references rather than the name of the story to save space; of course during collective worship you may wish to use the Bible; a Bible storybook; or re-tell the story yourself; in most cases we would recommend a retelling of the story; rather than reading from the Bible for young children; because of the difficulty of inappropriate language levels.

(Note a number followed by “f” indicates that verse and the one immediately following.)

THEME	BIBLE REFERENCES
Actions count	Genesis 24; Jonah; Matthew 18.23-34; Matthew 25.31-36; Luke; Mark 6.14-30; Mark 10.30-37; Mark 12.31-44; John 13.1-20
Authority & Leadership	Genesis 37 –45; I Samuel 8 with 10.17-24; I Samuel 16.1-13; II Kings 18.13-37 & 19.1-36; Nehemiah 1.1-4; 2; 4; 6.1-16; Daniel 3 & 6; Matthew 4.1-11; Matthew 8.5-13; Matthew 21-28; Mark 4.35-41; Mark 9.2-9; Mark 5.1-20; Mark 6.45-52; Mark 11. 1-19; Luke 2.39-52; Luke 6.1-5; Luke 19.28-40; Luke 19.45-48; Luke 20.19-26; Luke 23.1-49; Acts 27.1 – 28.1
Barriers	Genesis 2.4 – 3.24; Genesis 11.1-9; Joshua 6.1-23; Matthew 19.13-27; Mark 2.23 – 3.6; Luke 10.25 –37; Luke 18.35-43; Luke 19.45-48; Acts 10 – 11.18; Acts 19.21 – 20.1
Beginnings (and new beginnings)	Genesis 1 & 2; Genesis 2.4 – 3.24; Genesis 6.5 – 9.29; Genesis 11.31 – 13.18; Genesis 24; Genesis 32.3- 33.12; II Kings 5; II Kings 22.1-20 & 23.1-25; Nehemiah 1.1-4; 2; 4; 6.1-16; Matthew 3.11-17; Matthew 4.18-22; Matthew 19.13-27; Matthew 21-28; Mark 5.1-20; Luke 18.35-43; John 21.1-14; Acts 10 – 11.18
Belonging	Luke 2.39-52; Matthew 3.11-17; Matthew 7.24-27; Matthew 13.3-8; Luke 15.4 –32
Call	Genesis 11.31 – 13.18; Exodus 2.11 – 3.12; I Samuel 3.1-19; I Samuel 16.16-23; Jeremiah 1.4-19; Jonah; Matthew 4.18-22; Luke 19.1-10; John 21.1-14; Acts 9.1-18; Acts 10 – 11.18
Caring	Genesis 2.22 – 3.15; Exodus 1.8 – 2.10; II Kings 5; Amos; Matthew 9.1-8; Mark 2.1-14; Mark 12.31-44; Luke 10.25 – 37; Luke 15.4 –32; John 12.1-8
Changes	Genesis 11.1-9; Genesis 37 –45; Matthew 19.13-27; Luke 19.1-10; Mark 5.1-20; Acts 10 – 11.18
Commitment	Genesis 11.31 – 13.18; I Samuel 17; II Kings 5; II Kings 22.1-20 & 23.1-25; Jeremiah 38.1-13; Luke 2.39-52; Luke 4.1-13; Luke 21.1-4; Matthew 7.24-27; Matthew 13.3-8; Luke 12.13 –21; Mark 14.66-72; Matthew 21-28; Acts 6.1 –

	8.1; Acts 19.21 – 20.1
Community and co-operation	Exodus 19.s 1-20; 20; 24.3-8; Joshua 6.1-23; Judges 6 – 7; II Kings 22.1-20 & 23.1-25; Esther
Courage and conscience	Genesis 2.22 – 3.15; Exodus 2.11 – 3.12; Exodus 5.1-12 with.42; Joshua 2; Judges 7; I Samuel 17; I Kings 19.1-21; II Kings 18.13-37 & 19.1-36; Jeremiah 36 & 38; Nehemiah 1.1-4, 2, 4, 6.1-16; Esther; Daniel 3 & 6; Luke 10.25 –37; Luke 18.35-43; Luke 19.45-48; Mark 14.66-72; Matthew 21-28; Acts 5.12-42; Acts 6.1 – 8.1; Acts 15.1 - 16.40; Acts 20.22 – 25.12; Acts 27.1 – 28.1; Philemon
Deceit and dishonesty	Genesis 27.1-45; Judges 16.4-30; I Kings 21; II Kings 5; Amos; Matthew 2.1-12; Mark 14.12-26; Luke 19.1-10; Luke 19.45-48
Doubts and uncertainties (fear)	Exodus 2.11 – 3.12; I Kings 19.1-21; Jeremiah 1.4-19; Jonah; Esther; Matthew 21-28; Mark 4.35-41; Mark 6.45-52; Mark 14.27-52 & 66-72
Dreams and visions	Genesis 32.3 – 33.12; Genesis 37 –45; I Samuel 3.1-19; I Kings 19.1-21; Jeremiah 1.4-19; Ezekiel 37.1-14; Matthew 2.1-12; Matthew 4.1-11; Mark 9.2-9; Acts 9.1-18; Acts 10 – 11.18
Fairness and justice	Genesis 6.5 – 9.29; I Kings 12.1-16; Esther; Matthew 20.1-16; Luke 19.45-48; Luke 23.1-49
Faith and faithfulness	Genesis 6.5 – 9.29; Genesis 21.1-3 & 22.1-19; Judges 7; Ruth; II Kings 18.13-37 & 19.1-36; Jeremiah 36 & 38; Daniel 3 & 6; Luke 21.1-4; Matthew 4.1-11; Matthew 7.24-27; Matthew 13.3-8; Mark 4.35-41; Mark 14.66-72; Matthew 21-28; Mark 14.15-72; Acts 15.1- 16.40; Acts 27.1 – 28.1
Family; friendship and relationships	Genesis 2.4 – 3.24; Genesis 2.22 – 3.15; Genesis 11.1-9; Genesis 25.27-34 with 27.1-45; Genesis 37 –45; Exodus 1.8 – 2.10; Ruth; Luke 2.39-52; Luke 19.1-10; Matthew 9.1-8; Mark 2.1-14; Mark 14.66-72; Luke 10.30-37; Luke 15.11-32; John 12.1-8; Acts 10 – 11.18
Favouritism	Genesis 27.1-45; Genesis 37 – 45
Forgiveness	Jonah; Luke 19.1-10; Luke 15.4 –32; Matthew 9.1-8; Matthew 18.23-34; Matthew 21-28; Luke 18.10-14
Foundations for life	II Kings 22.1-20 & 23.1-25; Matthew 25.31-36; Luke 6.47-49
Freedom	Exodus 5.1-12; Exodus 5 – 6.13 & 7.14- 12.51; Luke 6.1-5; Mark 5.1-20; Luke 18.35-43
Good and evil	Genesis 2.4 – 3.24; I Samuel 17; Amos; Esther; Matthew 4.1-11; Matthew 21-28; Mark 5.1-20; John 13.1-20
Intolerance	Ruth; I Kings 12.1-16; Acts 10 – 11.18; Acts 19.21 – 20.1
Jealousy	Genesis 27.1-45; Luke 15.11-32
Journeys	Genesis 11.31 – 13.18; Exodus 5 – 6.13 & 7.14- 12.51; Ruth; Jonah; Luke 2.39-52; Luke 10.25 –37; Mark 4.35-41; Luke 19.28-40; Acts 9.1-18; Acts 20.22 – 25.12 Acts 27.1 – 28.1
Light and dark	Genesis 2.4 – 3.24; Matthew 21-28; Acts 15.1- 16.40
Loneliness	Jeremiah 1.4-19; Matthew 4.1-11; Matthew 21-28; Mark 14.66-72; Luke 19.1-10; Luke 10.25 –37; Luke 18.35-43; Luke 19.1-10
Lost and found	Genesis 37 –45; Luke 2.39-52; Luke 15.4 –32; Philemon
Loyalty	I Samuel 24 & 26; I Kings 12.1-16; I Kings 18.7 – 19.3; II

	Kings 18.13-37 & 19.1-36; Jeremiah 38.1-13; Mark 2.1-14; Mark 14.66-72; Matthew 21-28
Peer Group Pressure	Judges 16.4-30; Daniel 3; Daniel 6; Matthew 13.3-8; Mark 14.15-72; John 12.1-8
Perseverance	Genesis 11.31 – 13.18; I Kings 19.4-18; II Kings 5; Nehemiah 1.1-4; 2; 4; 6.1-16; Esther; Daniel 3 & 6; Luke 15.4 –32; Luke 18.35-43; Matthew 8.5-13; Luke 8.43-46; Matthew 21-28; Mark 2.1-14; Luke 19.1-10; Acts 10 – 11.18; Acts 20.22 – 25.12
Prayer	I Samuel 3.1-19; I Kings 18.7 – 19.3; I Kings 19.4-18; Luke 18.10-24
Precious things & gifts	Matthew 13.45f; Matthew 19.13-27; Matthew 20.1-16; Mark 12.31-44; Luke 19.1-10; Luke 21.1-4; Luke 12.13 –21; Luke 15.4 –32; John 12.1-8
Promises (including covenant)	Genesis 6.5 – 9.29; Exodus 2.11 – 3.12; Exodus 19.1-20; 20; 24.3-8; I Samuel 16.16-23; II Kings 22.1-20 & 23.1-25; Ezekiel 37.1-14; Mark 14.66-72; Luke 19.1-10
Renewal or Repentance	II Kings 22.1-20 & 23.1-25; Ezekiel 37.1-14; Luke 15.11-32; Luke 19.1-10; Luke 15.4 –32; Philemon
Rules & laws	Exodus 19.1-20; 20; 24.3-8; I Kings 12.1-16; II Kings 22.1-20 & 23.1-25; Mark 2.23 – 3.6; Luke 6.1-5
Signs; symbols and symbolic actions	Genesis 6.5 – 9.29; Exodus 2.11 – 3.12; Joshua 6.1-23; I Samuel 16.1-13; I Kings 19.4-18; Jeremiah 1.4-19; Jeremiah 36 & 38; Matthew 3.11-17; Matthew 21-28; Mark 4.35-41; Mark 11.15-19; Luke 19.28-40; Luke 19.45-48; Luke 20.19-26; John 13.1-20; Acts 10 – 11.18
Speaking up	I Kings 18.7 – 19.3; Jeremiah 19.1-20; Jeremiah 36 & 38; Daniel 3; Daniel 6; Matthew 5.14f; Mark 14.15-72; Luke 2.39-52; Luke 20.19-26; Acts 5.12-42; Acts 6.1 – 8.1; Acts 15.1- 16.40; Acts 20.22 – 25.12
Temptation	Matthew 4.1-11; Mark 14.66-72; Luke 4.1-13
Trust	Genesis 11.31 – 13.18; Genesis 21.1-3 & 22.1-19; Joshua 2; Judges 7; I Samuel 17; II Kings 18.13-37 & 19.1-36; Jeremiah 38.1-13; Daniel 3; Matthew 4.18-22; Matthew 8.5-13; Matthew 9.1-8; Mark 4.35-41; Mark 5.1-20; Luke 12.13 –21; Luke 18.35-43; Acts 27.1 – 28.1; Philemon

## Involving Children in the Organisation and Planning of Collective Worship

Obviously good collective worship is worship where children are not just passive spectators but enthusiastic contributors. Do they actually do more than sing the hymns and answer questions in collective worship? More and more Section 23 Inspection Reports are commenting on involving the pupils themselves in the organisation and provision of worship. Ways of doing this can include:

- Engagement or evoking a response. Setting a mood and creating a worshipful atmosphere is an important part of collective worship. Talk with pupils about the effectiveness of music and allow older children to be involved in the selection process.
- When telling stories as part of collective worship do not follow up with information seeking questions but encourage children to empathise with the characters e.g. "How do you feel about what happened in this story?" "Were you like \*\*\* in the story?" "Does the story remind you of anything in your own life?"
- If you are sure you can "get them back again" (!) give the children a few moments to allow them to talk with their neighbours about what they thought of the story and its meaning.
- Allow time for quiet reflection and/or silent prayer on the theme of the story. (You may like to brainstorm possible prayers first.)
- Have an established procedure for allowing children to contribute their personal prayer needs to the time of worship. Some examples include;
  - a prayer tree or plant (real or man-made) where children leave their topics for intercession written on leaf shapes on the tree;
  - individual classes or year groups have a set day of the week on which they can recommend the topics for prayer;
  - a book of prayers is kept in which pupils can write prayers which will be used in worship.
- Even if the worship is not class-led children may occasionally read their own prose or poetry, perform drama or mime, make music etc.
- Frequently schools are asked how they are assessing collective worship. Why not hand this over to your pupils for a time and ask them to record short comments on the acts of worship? An illuminating and thought-provoking experience!

The two forms of assembly which make most use of the pupils' talents are the "Good Work Assembly" and the class led "Show and Tell". On these special occasions the question needs to be asked "**Are these assemblies or collective worship?**" It is very easy for these activities to turn into displays of work; such assemblies are important sharing times and contribute to the building-up of the school community, but it is important to be certain that some of the elements of worship are present. Many such assemblies can be reconfigured as acts of collective worship given time and thought. (Note: The same problem arises with hymn practices; are they merely music lessons or can they become vehicles for Christian teaching?)