



# Working On Worship (17)

## Building Foundations for Worship

*Do Foundation 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.**



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.***

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.



## Introducing Collective Worship



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

With Foundation pupils we are setting in place 'foundations' for understanding worship just as we are setting foundations for other areas of life / 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, which is part of life for many people....
- to find out about Jesus and his life.....
- to investigate what worship is all about ...

**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.

## Joining 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 whole school assembly a week; on this day their special needs could be better catered for e.g. by using a shorter song. On the 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 primary school Year 6 children made special 'prayer cushions' for the new reception children to sit on at worship-time! This DT activity gave Y6's a chance to revisit what CW is about at a new level and Reception children to begin to discover that CW was going to be something new, special and different in their school lives. The children can use their prayer cushions for a sort of 'glorified' circle time worship in their own base, but also take them into whole school assembly.

## Doing your own thing

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



### Creating the right time e.g.

Look at establishing a 5 minute spot .....

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

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

### Creating a separate or 'sacred' space e.g.

Move the children into a different space 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 light a perfumed candle.

The words 'sacred' or 'holy' actually mean 'separate' from the ordinary – creating this special space is something the children can do.

### Creating a simple understanding e.g.

Teach children a special prayer /song which says what CW time is for. You can 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 The Values Worship Chest (see resources) the objects used for worship i.e. chest, coloured material, cross, Bible and candle are set up with the same words each day so children can join in – a bit like 'we're all going on a 'bear-hunt'.

### Creating a basic routine e.g.

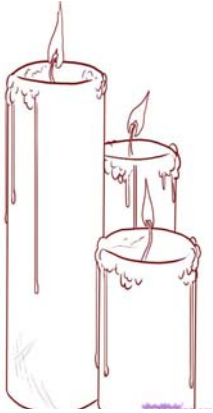
One teacher wrote about the use of her own special box ....

*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 about 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 a song and finally pull out a gold ribbon that the children held onto while we said a prayer, usually a thank you prayer, where the children said what they'd like to thank God for.*

This sense of routine enables the children to help 'run' the worship and greatly simplifies preparation and delivery.

## Keeping it short and simple

**Share short Silences** – give children the experience of silence around a special candle. Use a prayer or song as the candle is lit. Hold the silence for several seconds, increasing the time as children are able. Extinguish the flame with a candle-snuffer.



**Share short Stories** – don't go for anything complicated e.g. Find a simple book of Bible stories and work through from start to finish! Provide a special storyteller's chair. Visitors can come and read too e.g. the vicar, headteacher, an older child, a parent.

**Share short Songs** – learn some simple CW songs by singing them together and talking about what the words say. Using percussion and listening to songs the older children use. Use actions and movement to the songs.

## Introducing 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 listen to 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 recommend you scour Christian bookshops for good materials to use with young children.

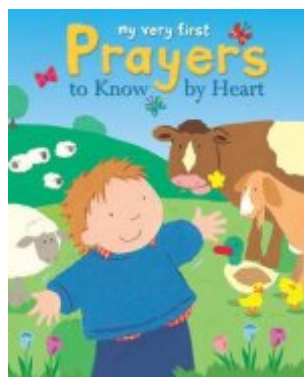
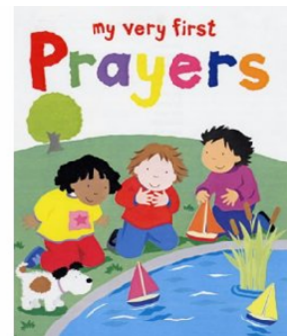
**The Values Worship Chest** - new publication in 2012 from Jumping Fish ~[www.gloucester.anglican.org/resources/jfish/](http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/resources/jfish/)

Developed for KS1 this is based on the 'Values for Life' resource used in many primary schools. A simple worship Chest contains a coloured drape, reflecting the church's season, and objects that reflect the theme. The children join in a simple liturgy that begins the worship, the theme is then introduced and followed by a short story and closing prayer.

*This could be adapted for Foundation children or used by KS1 when Foundation children join them.*

**Lion Hudson** has an extensive catalogue which you can download and many to be viewed online. <http://www.lionhudson.com/> They also own the 'CANDLE' imprint with more good titles.

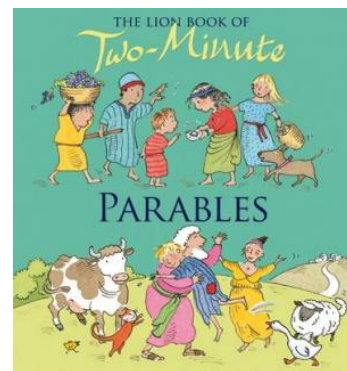
Classics such as 'My Very First Prayers' are always popular. Try these two newer publications:



< - Brand new this year, a selection of prayers and reflections which children could learn by heart. ISBN 9780745962733

The latest in a series of punchy easy to read bible story books, great for this age. ISBN: 9780745962016

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**BRF**, under their Barnabas imprint, publish some good children's Bibles.

<http://www.brfoonline.org.uk/bible/>

This is really intended as a bedtime story Bible for the home and provides a short story for every day of the year .....but it also provides just enough for CW time in school.

