

Working on Worship 9



**Good Morning
Everybody!**

The use of a distinctive greeting to make people feel welcome, acknowledge someone's arrival or indeed make your own presence known is common to most groups and societies. Greetings range from a simple 'hallo' to words specific to the time of day or year, from hand shakes to high-fives, ritual bows to intricate questions about health and family.

A greeting is generally used at the beginning of Collective Worship in schools too. And it has to be said that the long-drawn out 'Good morning everybody' at the start of assembly has acquired such a distinctive and drawn-out cadence that almost everyone in the country can imitate it. It is notoriously hard to eliminate the sing-song effect of everyone trying to say the greeting together but the need to greet everyone is strong and most schools persist with this age-old tradition. Some heads despair of the ritual and simply omit it; others have persisted, adding British Sign Language to the words themselves or trying out different languages or a greetings song for a change.

Greetings in Church

Many churches use a formal liturgical greeting, welcoming people into God's presence, reminding them of why they are there to worship. This is the case in Anglican churches, where services begin with some set words said by the priest or whoever is leading the service and a set response said by the congregation, for example:

Leader: **The Lord be with you**
People: **And also with you**

This particular greeting is the most commonly used but greetings may vary according to the service or the season of the year. The greetings make use of words from the Bible, and often encapsulate a key Christian belief or act as a call to worship, for example:

Priest: **This is the day the Lord has made**
People: **We will rejoice and be glad in it**

Why use a Christian liturgical greeting in Collective Worship?

As a result of SIAS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools), many church schools have opted for a crisp liturgical greeting, not so much to break the monotone 'good morning everyone' but rather to create a closer link with traditional church practice. Church schools have a responsibility to provide Christian worship on a daily basis for their pupils and are also expected to introduce an Anglican 'flavour' to their worship. In Church of England schools, therefore, it is perfectly natural for the teachers and often children themselves, to adopt the same kind of greetings as would be used in church.

It may also be deemed acceptable for the local Anglican minister to offer a Christian greeting to begin Collective worship in a Community school. It is worth remembering that familiarizing children with the diversity of language and culture is common practice in schools, for example, many have a welcome sign in their foyer written in many languages. If a visitor from a different country comes to visit the school, they often begin by offering a spoken greeting in their own language and teach children the appropriate response. In most schools it would be fine for a Christian visitor to do the same, for example:

Leader: Peace be with you.
People: And also with you.

Some ways to introduce Liturgical Greetings

If liturgical greetings are going to form part of the Collective Worship pattern of a school, it is important to give children some idea of what they are about and why they are used. An annual assembly might be used to introduce / explain the practice. Here is an example:

'The Lord be with you'

Gathering:

- Sing a 'Welcome' song as children arrive.
- Display the words for 'welcome' or 'good morning' in several languages for children to ponder over as they settle down.
- Say good morning ... maybe in different languages if you or the children can manage this / teach children 'good morning everybody' in BSL simply by signing it several times until all the children join in.



Engaging:

- Talk about ways we greet each other – maybe look at slides of different greetings or showing people greeting each other – or provide some drama with older children greeting people in different ways

- Teach the words *The Lord be with you*. Put the words up so children can see them e.g. words on large and separate cards for holding up. Or create a banner, a powerpoint (fade in / fade out) or a 'turn round' board (priest's words one side, people's on the other).
- Unpick the phrase simply: What does **Lord** mean? What would it be like to have a friend **with you** always? *Christians want to remind each other and everyone else that God is always there. Why? Remember the words used by a parent to comfort a child e.g. 'Mummy's here'.*
- What is the reply to this Christian greeting? What is the everyday equivalent? What are Christians trying to say?

Responding:

- **Practise** - saying the greeting. Learn it in BSL too if possible.
- **Sing a song** - about God's love and care.
- **Reflect:** What does it feel like to have someone to comfort you when you feel alone? Who helps you when you are afraid?
- **Pray:** Thank you Lord for promising to be with us always. Help us to know you are with us today, especially when Amen

Sending:

- When someone looks lonely or in need of help today, be there to help. See what you can do.
- Greet the children one final time – this time as a promise of God's presence with them as they go.
- Send them out singing a favourite song to remind them of God's presence as they go to class.

The 'Engaging' section of the assembly might equally well contain a story. There are many stories of God being with people in the Bible, sometimes in surprising ways:

- *Elijah and the ravens*
- *Elijah on the mountain tops*
- *Daniel in the Lions' Den*

Christmas songs and carols remind us that Jesus is known as 'emmanuel', which means 'God is with us'. Many stories of Jesus in the New Testament are stories of what it was like to have God arrive on the scene ... and teach ... or heal ... or forgive.

- *Jesus and the storm*
- *Zacchaeus*
- *Jairus' daughter*



How and what greeting should be used?

It is worth experimenting with how to use a greeting, for example:

- Different adults can say the greeting but so can the children – ask for volunteers, use a rota, say it on your birthday, child to say the words with an adult.
- Make a feature of the ritual – music faded out, candle lit, child greets assembled children, children greet each other ...
- Use the words 'The Lord be with you' but then pass the greeting round physically in a hand squeeze
- Video link up – greeting the bishop or another church school in the diocese or in the overseas link ... saying the Lord be with you (CMS) and praying for the bishop or these schools

When it comes to the words used:

- 'The Lord be with you' is the most common greeting but in some schools the simpler, and less controversial, 'Peace be with you / and also with you' might be tried.
- In some settings different seasonal versions and even different languages could be tried as the audience becomes familiar with the greeting.
- Local clergy or RE lessons could help generate new Christian greetings incorporating aspects of the Godhead or of Jesus Christ e.g. 'The Lord our Strength and protector be with you' or 'Jesus the Prince of Peace be with you this Christmas time.'

Flippin' Praise

Good sources of greetings can be found in the new Collective Worship resource 'Flippin' Praise – this is a children's flip book which focuses on four key words: Gathering, Engaging, Responding and Sending.. The words help children, teachers and clergy to create simply structured Collective Worship.

You can obtain copies of 'Flippin' Praise' from Diane Matthews on 01473 298570 or diane@stedmundsbury.anglican.org or from your Diocesan Schools' Adviser.

