

**The Meeting Place**

"That's the best bit of the day"

A resource guide for collective worship in schools  
By Ruth Dearnley

As 6 year old Caleb left the hall he turned and whispered to his mate, "I love it when we have meetings with God in the hall. That's my best bit of the day."

His ears were still ringing with the sound of the songs and a time when they had all been together in collective worship.

In our schools we want to be able to offer children the best collective worship we can. This is a resource to do just that and help children and young people explore the questions of life.

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### What's on offer?

Collective worship gives us the opportunity to do just that – to collect together, to meet together. It is a collection of differences – different faiths, different cultures, different ages and different backgrounds. It is a focal point of the day in any school community where all ages meet one another, share together and establish a sense of identity.

But that is not the sole purpose of collective worship.

As part of the school RE curriculum we offer children the opportunity:

- to learn what active faith looks like and feels like
- for each person to explore their own position in relation to one another and other faith communities

But there is that aspect of faith that is not learnt but experienced. There is that point common to humanity that we are not just reliant on all we can control or achieve but on the deeper sense. It is a sense of being part of a creation where we were made with a purpose and are part of an intended moment of time.

Our collective worship is the place where this can happen and nurture this sense of that spiritual part of our lives which needs recognition and expression.

The present position in law is that all children from the age of 5-18 will have daily access to collective worship. We recognise the challenges that this presents to many schools due to resources, space and time but it is very much our intention that this rich part of a school's life is not side-lined or under resourced.

Schools are asked to provide pupils with the opportunity to worship as understood in the normal and natural sense of offering reverence or veneration to a divine being or power. Furthermore the majority of acts of worship must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, which particularly means that they should reflect the traditions of the Christian belief and must contain some elements which accord a special status to Jesus Christ.

But they are asked to provide acts of worship that are appropriate for all pupils whatever their own family background.

Also joining in is more than a passive attendance but should enable all pupils to respond.

Collective worship is not an impressive piece of theatre but a meeting place which is active, vibrant and passionate.

Beware of trivialising the spiritual.

Think carefully about the meaning of worship.

It can mean:

- Awareness of
- Appreciation of
- Respect for
- Preference for
- Commitment to
- Devotion to
- Adoration of

The diversity of response indicates a way forward for worship in schools.

Worship is offensive only if pupils are compelled to respond in a particular way. If acts of worship can be designed which leave children free to respond in ways that are appropriate to their family backgrounds and with their own minds and abilities to make choices then they are successful.

The tension is between providing an act of worship that is a celebration appropriate for the whole school community and at the same time ensuring that worship is clearly Christian in character.

## Creating "The Meeting Place"

### **Setting the scene:**

The act of collective worship can be just a few minutes to 20 minutes but it is not the length of time but the quality of meeting and worship that takes place. Usually the practice has been that there is a daily assembly and at some point the act of worship takes up part or all of that time.

Creative ways of marking the starting point:

The Headteacher has handed out the prizes for the best readers of the week. Now had come the time to "do the worship". So often teachers can find it difficult to facilitate this or it comes as a continuation of the prizes and punishments from a few moments earlier. What creative ways can turn the corner from the assembly to the moments of collective worship where we meet in a different way? This move can be seamless and the children would not notice it but they do know that worship is not the same as notices and praying is not the same as rule making.

Symbols and artefacts can work really well to bridge and mark the transition. Candles, music, pictures and many other things can be used to signify the beginning of CW. To light a candle for a specific person or purpose significant to the school community on that day marks a moment when we are together, ready to be together in a different way, to worship. For older children known prayer or prose patterns that are communally said together can do the same.

One primary school would lift a thick glass bowl on to the table and place it on a tray. The bowl was surrounded by a selection of beautifully coloured stones – all different. The stones were carefully placed in the bowl until the water just flowed over the edge of the bowl to signify a collection of people gathered not just in a place but in the presence of another.

### Good ingredients:

#### **Prayer**

You can find wonderful books of prayers. But children, when encouraged will want to write their own prayers. The meeting place of collective worship allows children to express their worries and thanks to God in their own way.

During collective worship in one school two boys got up to pray. The first thanked God "that the conkers this year were the biggest he had ever seen". Immediately followed by the other who "thanked God that his Dad had finally got a job and was smiling again". Children when given the freedom and the space can use this meeting place to talk to God about the things that really matter to them and they all sit comfortably together in their diversity and honesty.

Prayer is as simple and honest, as liturgical and responsive as you want it to be. The resources are enormous just go looking and remember that the best resources are the children themselves when they freely offer their prayers in their own words.

#### **Singing/music**

There are amazing resources available. Do not just rely on old books and old products. Kevin Mayhew is one of the top publishers of resources of music books and CDs. Kids Source is a series of 2 books with accompanying CDs of recordings of over 40 songs that you can play and learn in any collective worship context.

There are new songs written every year that are appropriate for collective worship. Go to Spring Harvest Resources and there is a live-recorded CD of new songs every year for any school to choose the songs that work for them and make them their own. We must never get trapped into relying on the old ones from yester-year or decide that all the old songs are part of the past and nothing is relevant to the present day in school worship.

Outoftheark music and Redhead music are both popular resources with schools – go to their websites for songs for Easter or

[www.ioc.ac.uk](http://www.ioc.ac.uk)

[www.stapleford-centre.org](http://www.stapleford-centre.org)  
[www.culham.ac.uk](http://www.culham.ac.uk)

Liturgy Assemblies for Infants  
Book 1, 2 and 3 by Diana Walker, Published by RMEP (1999)

Faith in History  
Ideas for RE, History and Assembly in the Primary School by Margaret Cooling, Published by  
Eagle (1994)

Assemblies for Primary Schools  
Autumn, Spring, Summer Terms by Margaret Cooling, published by RMEP (1991)

Space for Reflection  
Published termly on the RE Today website for subscribers  
[www.retoday.org.uk](http://www.retoday.org.uk)

THE COLLECTIVE WORSHIP RESOURCE  
Links to Collective worship Resources

Collective Worship Resources:

[cowo.culham.ac.uk/](http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/)

Collective Worship Resource - from the Culham Institute, in association with the National Society

[www.culham.ac.uk/storykeepers/](http://www.culham.ac.uk/storykeepers/)

These resources are based on the Storykeepers television / video series.

<http://www.assemblies.org.uk/>

Assemblies Website (SPCK)

[www.blackburn.anglican.org/cw/](http://www.blackburn.anglican.org/cw/)

Diocese of Blackburn Board of Education - Collective School Worship

[www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective\\_worship/](http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective_worship/)

Diocese of Ely Education and Training: Schools - RE and Collective Worship Resources

[www.saled.org/re.php?action=collective](http://www.saled.org/re.php?action=collective)

Diocese of Salisbury Board of Education - Collective Worship

<http://www.hibbert-assembly.org.uk/>

The Hibbert Assembly

Material provided by the Hibbert Trust.

[www.retoday.org.uk/sfr/](http://www.retoday.org.uk/sfr/)

RE Today: Space for Reflection

Assemblies and guidance for collective worship (password required - available to RE today subscribers).

<http://www.assemblingcitizens.co.uk/>

Assembling Citizens

Secondary school assembly materials on citizenship issues from The Stapleford Centre (subscription required).

[www.angelfire.com/trek/annegordon/](http://www.angelfire.com/trek/annegordon/)

Anne's Page - Exploring Christian Faith with Children

Includes general advice and some starting points and suggestions for Collective Worship, along with 'Times and Seasons', a brief guide to the church's year, again with suggestions for Collective Worship.

[www.cist.org/ay/](http://www.cist.org/ay/)

Christians in Schools in the Stockport Area: Collective Acts of Worship

Outlines for Collective Worship suitable for Key Stage 1 children.

<http://www.schoolassemblies.btinternet.co.uk/>

<http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/links/index.php>

School Assemblies for Busy Teachers  
Assembly ideas, scripts and other resources contributed by teachers.

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/assemblies/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/assemblies/)  
Teachernet - Assemblies  
A bank of over 100 resources written by teachers for teachers.

Other sites which include Collective Worship material:  
[www.reep.org/cw/](http://www.reep.org/cw/)  
REEP for Schools

<http://www.bandapilot.org.uk/>  
The SEAL materials, including assembly resources, are designed to provide a whole-school approach to promoting social, emotional and behavioural skills.

[www.christian-aid.org.uk/learn/](http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/learn/)  
Christian Aid - le@rn zone

[www.cafod.org.uk/resources/schoolsteachers](http://www.cafod.org.uk/resources/schoolsteachers)  
CAFOD Schools

[www.thefaithzone.org.uk/cowo.html](http://www.thefaithzone.org.uk/cowo.html)  
Faithzone Videos: Collective Worships based on the videos.

[www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/](http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/)  
Bible Reading Fellowship - Barnabas in Schools

[www.spinnaker.org.uk](http://www.spinnaker.org.uk)  
Spinnaker Trust - resources site

Other worship resources:  
[www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/collectiveworship/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/collectiveworship/)  
BBC School Radio - Collective Worship  
The most recent programmes are available on the website, along with background information.

[www.bathandwells.org.uk/changing\\_lives/mission/wm\\_linked\\_lectionary.php](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/changing_lives/mission/wm_linked_lectionary.php)  
Diocese of Bath and Wells - Development Matters  
Lectionary readings linked to global issues / world development facts, quotes and illustrations.

<http://www.fishymusic.co.uk/>  
Fishy Music - Resources for Collective Worship  
Audio CDs of original material for daily Collective Worship in the classroom - 'five minutes with God, five days of the week'.

[www.sermons4kids.com/henry\\_martin.htm](http://www.sermons4kids.com/henry_martin.htm)  
The Art of Henry Martin  
A collection of illustrations on biblical subjects, ideal for use on overhead projectors and in PowerPoint presentations.

<http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/links/index.php>

(The graphics are free for use in churches and schools, but not to be used or distributed for profit.)

<http://www.prayingeachday.org/>

Praying Each Day

Prayer and education site of the De La Salle Brothers in Great Britain including reflections and prayers for each day of the year.

Background material / Guidance:

[www.natsoc.org.uk/schools/curriculum/worship/](http://www.natsoc.org.uk/schools/curriculum/worship/)

The National Society: School Worship

Guidance on the law; resources

[www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective\\_worship/policy/](http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective_worship/policy/)

Diocese of Ely: Collective Worship in Church Schools

Guidance on the law; advice; resources.

<http://www.encounterchristianity.co.uk/>

Encounter Christianity

Web site to accompany the series of books, designed for teaching RE at KS 1 and 2 in a fresh and informative way.

<http://www.redbridgerenet.co.uk/>

Redbridge RE Network - Collective Worship

Articles include 'Forming a Collective Worship Policy' and 'Monitoring Collective Worship'.

<http://www.norfolkesinet.org.uk/pages/viewpage.asp?unqid=1598>

Norfolk EsiNet: Collective Worship in Schools

Includes practical advice on policies and planning, and guidelines for visitors taking collective worship.

All-age worship:

[cofe.anglican.org/worship/](http://cofe.anglican.org/worship/)

The Church of England - Worship

Common Worship and The Book of Common Prayer available on-line.

<http://www.rootsontheweb.com/>

Rootsontheweb.com

'Roots is an ecumenical resource programme based on the Revised Common Lectionary to support the worship and learning of the whole Church community.' (subscription required)

<http://www.spiritseasons.com/>

Seasons of the Spirit

All-age worship resource.

[talks2children.itsforministry.org](http://talks2children.itsforministry.org)

Talks to Children

Includes a Scripture Index and an index by Season.

<http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/links/index.php>



<http://www.familyworship.org.uk/>  
Family Worship Resources  
Focus on church all-age worship - includes music.

<http://www.textweek.com/>  
The Text This Week  
Links to a range of resources including an art index and movie theme index.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>  
Sermons4Kids  
A large collection of Bible based talks, along with word puzzles, worksheets and colouring pages.

[www.christian-aid.org.uk/worship/](http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/worship/)  
Christian Aid  
Worship resources

<http://www.dltk-bible.com/>  
DLTK's Bible Activities  
'Sunday School' resources.

Prayer:  
<http://www.sacredspace.ie/>  
Sacred Space  
Scripture readings and prayers for each day with accompanying guidance.

[vision.marklink.org](http://vision.marklink.org)  
Vision 2000  
Daily readings and thoughts for reflection

<http://www.wellsprings.org.uk/>  
Wellsprings on the Web  
(Catholic) liturgy and prayer resources.

<http://www.invitationtoprayer.org/>  
Prayers for peace, justice and reconciliation.

<http://www.prayerguide.org.uk/>  
The Prayer Guide  
Includes advice on leading prayer with children's groups.

<http://www.worldprayers.org/>  
World Prayers  
Multicultural Prayer Archive

The Bible:  
[bible.gospelcom.net](http://bible.gospelcom.net)  
Bible Gateway

<http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/links/index.php>

Bible search engine, offering a range of translations and including an audio Bible.

<http://www.ccel.org/wwsb/>

World Wide Study Bible

Includes background resources for each chapter e.g. commentaries; study guides; links.

[www.americanbible.org/site/PageServer?pagename=bib\\_search\\_the\\_bible](http://www.americanbible.org/site/PageServer?pagename=bib_search_the_bible)

American Bible Society: Advanced Bible Search

Offers a range of translations.

Quotations

[www.bartleby.com/100/](http://www.bartleby.com/100/)

Bartlett's Familiar Quotations on-line

<http://www.quoteworld.org/>

QuoteWorld.org

[www.followyourdreams.com/food.html](http://www.followyourdreams.com/food.html)

Follow Your Dreams: Food for Thought

Inspirational Quotations

<http://www.appleseeds.org/>

Apple Seeds

'Quotations and short stories from eclectic sources.'

[creativeproverbs.com](http://creativeproverbs.com)

Creative Proverbs From Around the World

Online Texts / Stories:

[www.ipl.org/div/subject/browse/hum60.60.00/](http://www.ipl.org/div/subject/browse/hum60.60.00/)

Internet Public Library: Online Texts

Index of texts freely available over the Internet e.g. Aesop's Fables;

Shakespeare; classic drama and fiction.

[www.inspirationalstories.com/categories.html](http://www.inspirationalstories.com/categories.html)

Afterhours Inspirational Stories

[misslink.org/children/bibstory2.html](http://misslink.org/children/bibstory2.html)

God's Story for Children

Stories for children including Bible stories.

Poems:

[www.theotherpages.org/poems/](http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/)

Poets' Corner

[www.bartleby.com/verse/](http://www.bartleby.com/verse/)

Verse: Poetry Anthologies online

<http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/links/index.php>

Biographies:  
[justus.anglican.org/resources/bio/bioalpha.html](http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bio/bioalpha.html)  
Biographical sketches of memorable Christians of the past

<http://www.catholic.org/saints/>  
Catholic Online: Saints and Angels  
Index of saints with information about each one.

<http://www.biography.com/>  
Biography.com  
Over 25,000 brief biographies.

Music resources  
<http://www.songquery.com/>  
SongQuery.com  
Christian music search engine for music CDs, sheet music and accompaniment tracks.

[www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/3819/media.htm](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/3819/media.htm)  
IMC Christian MIDI Music Archives

<http://www.grahamkendrick.co.uk/>  
Graham Kendrick  
Includes sound files. All songs are covered under the Church Copyright Licence scheme (CCLI).

[cyberhymnal.org](http://cyberhymnal.org)  
The Cyber Hymnal  
Over 5,000 Christian hymns and songs, including lyrics, scores, MIDI files and history.

[www.oremus.org/hymnal/](http://www.oremus.org/hymnal/)  
Oremus Hymnal  
Online hymnal containing texts and MIDI files of tunes, with particular emphasis on the Anglican tradition.

Art / Graphics:  
<http://www.biblepicturegallery.com/>  
Bible Picture Gallery  
Large collection of free images; membership required to download large high-resolution graphics.

[www.sermons4kids.com/hmartin.htm](http://www.sermons4kids.com/hmartin.htm)  
Sermons4Kids: Art of Henry Martin

<http://www.ebibleteacher.com/>  
EBible Teacher  
Computer resources for worship, including graphics and PowerPoint examples.

<http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/links/index.php>

[www2.evansville.edu/ecoleweb/images.html](http://www2.evansville.edu/ecoleweb/images.html)  
The Ecole Initiative: Index of Images

<http://www.decadeministries.co.uk/>  
Decade Ministries  
Visual resources for all-age worship.

Drama:  
[www.funandgames.org/drama\\_frame.html](http://www.funandgames.org/drama_frame.html)  
Fun and games.org  
Links to Christian drama sources on the web.

<http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/links/index.php>