

Collective worship resource pack

Includes:

- SACRE's policy on collective worship
- Advice to those leading assemblies
- Guidance for religious leaders
- Some Primary Collective Worship Resources
- Some Secondary Collective Worship Resources
- Useful Websites
- Suggested themes for collective worship
- Primary self-evaluation toolkit
- Sample assemblies for secondary schools



February 2009

INTRODUCTION:

The South Gloucestershire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education has recently revised its Collective Worship policy and has decided to send further guidance to schools.

Collective worship helps to shape the ethos of a school and sets the tone for the day. Acts of collective worship are not meant to be mini-church services but should provide a space for reflection for children from religious and non-religious backgrounds alike if they are to assist their spiritual development. Collective worship is meant to be educational, not indoctrinatory, helping pupils to reflect about concerns beyond the material, to encourage concern for others and to help them to explore shared values.

With this in mind, we felt that it would be helpful to provide some guidance for visitors, who may be unaware of our inclusive aims, as well as for teachers. We also felt that it would be helpful to provide lists of resources, both books and websites.

We are aware that not all schools provide assemblies for large groups every day so we have also provided some 'Thought for the Day' examples that can be used in classes/tutor groups.

OFSTED has continually found, for a variety of reasons, that primary schools do better than secondaries in providing good experiences for pupils in collective worship. With this in mind we have provided some worked examples aimed at Key Stages 3 and 4 (though some might also work well at Upper Key Stage 2) All these examples have been tried and tested in a South Gloucestershire secondary school.

Alderman Colin Cradock
Chair of the South Gloucestershire SACRE

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POLICY FOR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

South Gloucestershire Council expects:

- every school to have a policy for Collective Worship;
- the policy to be drawn up and implemented as carefully as that for any other activity;
- the policy to be drawn up in accordance with the law, but reflect as far as possible the consensus of the views of staff, governors and the wider community.

The following paragraphs will enable schools to consider the policy for Collective Worship they are expected to produce and, where necessary, to revise it in accordance with the criteria set out below.

1. The Legal Framework

- All pupils, including sixth-form students, attending a maintained school should take part in daily Collective Worship. However, from September 2007, sixth-form students have been able to exercise the right to withdraw from Collective Worship.
- Collective Worship need no longer be held at the start of the school day [originally part of the Education Reform Act 1988, now consolidated within the 1996 Education Act].
- There may be a single act of worship for all pupils or students, or separate acts for pupils or students in different age groups or in different school groups.
- Responsibility for arranging school worship rests:

- in community schools with the headteacher after consultation with the governing body;
- in voluntary controlled and voluntary aided schools with the governing body after consultation with the headteacher.
- Acts of Collective Worship will normally take place on school premises, though the governing bodies have discretion to organise Collective Worship elsewhere on special occasions.
- Nothing in the 1988 Education Reform Act affects parents' rights, as originally established in the 1944 Education Act, to withdraw their children from R.E. and collective worship if they wish. This is now consolidated in the 1996 Education Act, Section 359.
- Neither has any change been made to the law as originally expressed in Section 30 of the 1944 Education Act now consolidated in the 1996 Education Act and reflected in Section 60 of the 1998 Education Act, which, with certain specific exceptions in the case of teachers in voluntary aided schools and reserved teachers in voluntary controlled or special agreement schools, prohibits discrimination against teachers on the grounds of their religious opinions or practice in participating or not participating in acts of worship or religious education.

2. The Nature of Collective Worship in Schools

The law

- The law states that the collective worship organised by the school is to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'.
- For this purpose, 'broadly Christian' means that worship that reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief should be the preponderant form of worship.
- It is not necessary for every act of worship to be of this character, but, within each school term, the majority of such acts must be so.
- Any such worship should not be distinctive of any particular Christian denomination.
- In the Secretary of State's view, an act of worship which is 'broadly Christian' need not contain only Christian material provided that, taken as a whole, it reflects the traditions of Christian belief.
- Acts of worship should take into account pupils' ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds.

- Those schools with a religious character should ensure that their Collective Worship is in accord with the religious tradition of the school.

Guidance

DFE Circular 1/94 is not legislation but offers guidance. It defines worship as:

- concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power;
- needing (if it is to be broadly Christian) to contain some elements which accord special status to Jesus Christ;
- implying more than simply passive attendance. It should be capable of eliciting a response from pupils, even though on a particular occasion some of the pupils may not feel able actively to identify with the act of worship.

The view of Ofsted

In its most recent report on Collective worship, OFSTED has commended spiritual development in over half of primary schools. It considers that the vast majority of schools provide a daily act of collective worship, mainly of a Christian nature. Assemblies frequently deal with aspects of personal relationships and the central themes of Christianity and other major world religions.

In Secondary schools the majority of schools are commended by Ofsted but a minority of schools, including some with multicultural populations of their own, are not considered to be doing enough to build an appreciation of cultural diversity.

[Reference: <http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/guidance/>]

SACRE's view

The South Gloucestershire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education would wish teachers of any religious persuasion, or of none, to feel able to participate in and lead acts of Collective Worship which are genuinely worshipful in a general sense.

We favour a **broad** definition of worship which allows children to reflect upon their shared human experience and feelings of joy and sadness, thankfulness and need, their reflections on shared values and concerns and the exploration of the spiritual area of experience. These experiences and attitudes can also lead to a fuller and more mature capacity for worship.

As with all areas of the curriculum, Collective Worship should be a valid educational experience. There is also the need to respect the different beliefs of teachers, parents and children. With this in mind, provision should be made for the opportunity to worship. Many people have argued that worship is the activity of a believing community and, therefore, school worship is impossible, since a school community contains non-believers as well as believers. While this argument has a certain logic, it restricts worship to religious communities.

3. Approaches

The Act states that the Collective Worship organised by the school is to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. We should note that this means that most school worship should reflect Christian **beliefs**, not necessarily Christian worship practices.

These beliefs encompass:

- an understanding of God as our loving creator
- an underlying purpose to creation and human responsibility for it: (*for example in interest in ecology, pollution and stewardship of the earth's resources arises from this belief*)
- human beings' responsibility before God and yet the failure to meet those demands fully; (*for example opposition to prejudice, cruelty, violence, arise from this belief*)
- the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings: (*for example value of human life, concern for self-knowledge, co-operation, respect arise from this belief*)
- God's purpose for a just and harmonious world; (*for example young people's yearnings, concerns for cause and impatience with unfairness could be said to reflect this belief*)
- The teachings of Jesus, who promoted concern for the needs of others (particularly minorities), gratitude, and forgiveness, and who opposed hypocrisy, exploitation, pedantry, showiness, and the harsh judgement of others

These Christian beliefs are reflected in the life and teaching of Jesus but also give rise to values which are in harmony with the broad spiritual and moral concerns that are shared by the world's religions.

4. Aims of Collective Worship

Acts of collective worship can:

- foster a sense of belonging by bringing pupils together to celebrate shared values of the school and the community;
- foster a sense of wonder and awe at the beauty, mystery and power of the world;
- allow reflection on the fundamental questions of life, and focus attention away from the concerns of the moment to those things which are of eternal concern to human beings;
- provide an opportunity for celebration, thanksgiving and sharing of emotions such as love, joy, hope, friendship, acceptance, anguish, fear, reverence, forgiveness etc;
- foster a concern for the needs of other people;
- provide a time for sharing successes and failures in personal, school and community life;
- provide an experience of being part of a caring community;
- foster new insights about life and foster empathy for others;
- enable pupils to approach the 'threshold' of worship by instilling in them a worshipful attitude (characterised by feelings such as awe, wonder, being uplifted, elation, deep appreciation, gratitude, respect, reverence and trepidation).

5. Organisation and Grouping

The way in which a school gathers together for collective worship and the assembly environment very often determines the pupils' attitude to what takes place.

The number of students in large secondary schools could make an assembly of the whole school impossible, especially if everyone is to be seated comfortably. It may be more appropriate for gatherings to be held in smaller units such as upper or lower school, house, year or tutor groups. Likewise, in a primary school, infants and juniors may find it helpful to meet separately on some days of the week, and there will also be a place for year or class assemblies.

6. Content and Presentation

The school should seek to involve as many staff and pupils as possible, although the head teacher or her/his representative will need to co-ordinate the various contributions.

The unifying element for each act of collective worship will be a central theme focusing the attention of all taking part on a single idea.

School or local events, a topic explored by one class, the lives and experiences of people past and present, current religious festivals, national and international days, are examples of suitable themes for collective worship.

The methods used to present particular themes may include:

- the spoken word: story, poetry, personal experiences and anecdotes, jokes, interviews, discussion, readings from the Bible and from other religious and secular literature, choral speaking, thoughts for the day, quotations, prayers, guided fantasy, visualisation etc;
- the sung word: hymns pop songs, folk songs, chants, singing games etc;
- visual stimuli: pictures, posters, artefacts, natural objects, religious objects, personal objects, works of art, slides (or a single slide), video recordings, OHP acetate etc;
- performance: dance, music, mime, drama, role play, simulation, talent shows, puppets etc;
- music: classical, pop, folk, used in conjunction with slides, performed live, background, mood setting etc;
- broadcasts - radio and television;
- preparing and sharing food;
- silence: stilling, reflection, contemplation, meditation and, if appropriate, prayer.

In today's pluralist society a creative silence may well be considered to be more inclusive than vocalised prayer. It can give an opportunity for prayer, without insisting on it. People can be guided to be still, to quieten their mental chatter and to discover their deeper self, the ground of their being, that place which spiritual writers identify as the dwelling of God. If done well, such acts of collective worship could encourage a less frenetic, more peaceful ethos in a school.

Assemblies may thus be 'Christian worship' if they stimulate young people to reflect, to feel awe, to learn to be still in order to discover their deeper self.

7. Opting out

We hope that our inclusive policy will be broadly accepted by a wide variety of people. Many parents see the provision of acts of worship by a school as part of its expression of care for the well being of its pupils. However, there may be occasions when a parent insists on their right to withdraw their children from Collective Worship.

In this case the school can offer three alternatives:

- pupils can simply not attend collective worship and spend their time off the school premises with their parents or be under the supervision of a member of staff elsewhere in the school;
- parents and headteacher together can agree to make informal parallel provision for those of a different faith, provided that this does not become the school's main act of worship and no additional costs fall on the school or the LEA;
- the headteacher can apply to SACRE for permission to build worship around a faith other than Christianity.

If a school believes that it is not appropriate to hold mainly Christian acts of worship it can seek a determination from SACRE which will allow it to plan its acts of worship around a system of belief which is other than Christian.

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Policy approved by the South Gloucestershire SACRE at its meeting held on 9th July 2008

Date of next review: July 2012, or earlier if legislation alters.



ADVICE TO THOSE LEADING ASSEMBLIES BY THE REVEREND JOHN HARLEY

John Harley is the denominational support officer to the General Assembly of the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, and a full time teacher.

Before we look at ideas for making assemblies effective and memorable, let us briefly consider *why* assemblies are necessary for a school or college community. We're all going to have our different ideas about this question but here are some general ones:

Assemblies can:

1. Provide a time of reflection and calm at the beginning of an increasingly intense school day.
2. Help focus the school community on aspects of school life, religious and secular festivals, local and world events.
3. Provide learning opportunities on issues of ethics, morals, values and beliefs.
4. Unite the whole community in quality time together.
5. Celebrate the achievements of children and staff.
6. Provide pupils of all cultures and faiths with the chance to feel included and valued.

Some valuable ingredients to consider while creating an assembly:

1. **Begin in style.** How we begin an assembly is so important in focusing the attention of the children or young people and setting the whole *tone* of our time together. It can be very effective for the children to file into the chosen space in silence. The leader can start with some inspirational words or some music. It is crucial to stress that an assembly provides a different way of *being* and interacting for the community - therefore this quality time needs to be framed carefully. To start an assembly with notices about the lunch queue can be a missed opportunity!
2. **Here's one I made earlier!** Participation can be, of course, a key to a really brilliant assembly. A group of children can prepare a drama sketch, artwork, or story before the assembly and make a presentation. The more children are actively involved the better and the greater the impact of the message. An extra dimension is for the leader to ask questions and invite the children to participate spontaneously.
3. **Mind the gap!** Assemblies can offer us opportunities for encouraging children and young people to reflect on their lives and learn how to calm themselves. Allow time for silence (how often do *any* of us build some moments into our day to be still and quiet?), meditation - this can take the form of a prayer or a poem - and listening to music. Don't shy away from using prayers from different religions - just be careful to achieve a good balance so that over the school year a diverse range of

faiths and beliefs is explored. Children are inherently open-minded - let us keep them so by showing a respect for different beliefs.

4. **Rediscovering ritual.** Our lives are jam-packed with secular rituals: queuing, giving flowers to one another, going on demonstrations, going through airport security! Assemblies are an ideal setting to show children the power of rituals in our daily lives. Rituals do not have to be essentially religious - they can be simple exercises that develop a sense of community, sharing and trust. Some examples may include dressing a tree of life (children write wishes/hopes on leaves made of paper and decorate a rubber plant or an image of a tree) and celebrating the beauty of colour (bowls are passed around - each person chooses a small piece of fruit, places it in the palm of the hand and everyone eats collectively - like a communion). Also offering the peace or saying the word Namaste, a Hindu blessing (participants shake the hands of a few people around them wishing them peace and well-being).
5. **Images speak louder than words.** Try and use visual aids, images and symbols as much as possible.
6. **Hitting the funny bone!** Humour can bring us joy, inspire us, help us remember, and unify us.
7. **Once upon a time.** Storytelling is an ancient, incredibly liberating and life-changing ingredient for our assemblies. Stories can be, by their very nature, hugely inclusive and accessible to all. Some of the strongest stories will allow people of all ages to have an 'aha' moment as they can be understood and enjoyed on many levels.
8. **Melody-maker.** Music making is a powerful experience through which human beings since the beginning of time have found unity and oneness. Children's musical talents can be expressed, music on CD can be played and appreciated and all can sing together. [Out of the Ark Music](#) has produced some excellent songs for school communities based on a variety of topics - from self-esteem to harvest.
9. **End on a high.** Think carefully about the ending. It is important to retain some of the atmosphere and sense of community gained during an assembly as pupils file out. One can use music or silence to keep minds focused while everyone leaves.

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

GUIDANCE FOR CLERGY AND MINISTERS

Taken from the Culham Institute website
<http://www.culham.ac.uk/care/worship/index.php>

Acts of Worship

Sooner or later, you will be asked to prepare an act of worship for a local school. Although many people think the Act of Worship is part of the RE provision, this is not so. However, good planning and liaison will make the most of the opportunity for both you and the RE department.

Getting Ready

Step 1: Prepare yourself

ASK FOR documentation on

- the school's worship policy
- school aims

ARRANGE TO

- talk to the worship co-ordinator
- attend an equivalent act of worship beforehand

Step 2: Visit the school to meet the staff and check the environment

Ask questions about **a) Technical points**

Participants: how long does it take pupils to assemble and disperse?

For secondary schools, particularly, lessons must start on time, however keen pupils may be on worship over-running!

Timing: Who will be there? What age (do you know how old Year 9 pupils are?) How many staff will be present?

There is a practice in some schools (usually primary) of all staff departing and leaving the worship leader high and dry at the front of the hall. This is to be deplored! Quite apart from Health and Safety, or discipline issues, it signals to pupils that

1. we don't extend to visitors even the basic courtesy of listening to what they have to say or
2. worship is something children do (or have done to them) and adults clear off whenever there's a chance.

Notices, instructions and other school customs:

- Do these form part of the worship assembly? Will you be required to do anything about them?
- Do the participants usually sing - if so what, and how are they accompanied?
- How does the event usually begin - and end? Do you hand over to the school staff or dismiss the pupils back to classes? How?

Ask questions about **b) Content**

Is your worship part of the termly plan (it should be!)

What is the theme, and what aspects have already been included? Are there specific aspects you are asked to cover, or that it would be useful to cover?

Are there any school customs to take into consideration

e.g. Do the participants usually sing - if so what, and how are they accompanied? Or does the head usually say something? If so, when?

VIEW THE PLACE where worship happens

Equipment: What is available and where is it? Decide whether you feel able to operate it yourself or who to ask for help. Remember to check lighting arrangements and visibility issues if you are intending to use an audiovisual aid or the power of amplification if you are going to use music etc..

Step 3: Detailed Planning

Now you are ready for detailed planning. This checklist should help:

On the basis of your preparation, decide first principles

What exactly am I trying to do through this act of worship?

- replicate the worship in my church?
- inform pupils about some aspect of my belief or practice?
- stimulate them to think - religiously/spiritually/more deeply?
- be an attractive role model for religion/faith/Christianity?

The answer to this question is to be found by looking through the school's worship policy and adopting the aim or aims you can work towards with integrity.

Example: from Sunderland and Durham Guidelines

Schools would not be seeking through broadly Christian worship:

- To compel students to worship
- To convert them to Christianity
- To assume belief

but would be seeking

- To present them with the beliefs of the Christian faith in a manner suitable to their ages
- To relate those beliefs to the student's experiences of life
- To provide sufficient stimulus for reflection
- To provide the opportunity for a response to take place
- To provide the opportunity for that response to be either Christian or some other kind.

What material shall I select?

Is the material suitable...

- for the pupils?

- Their aptitude and understanding
- Their concentration span
- Any involvement they might have in the act of worship
- Providing some variety (i.e. from other acts of worship they have or that you might have given before)

- to the subject?

- Suitable for the aim and theme
- Leading to a coherent whole
- Linking with any follow-up material planned by the school

How will I deliver it?

What resources do I need on the day, e.g.

- OHP
- pupils to read / perform
- flipchart
- slide projector

Who do I liaise with / ask for help

- beforehand?
- on the day?

CALENDAR OF COMMEMORATIONS

Christianity:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/faith.shtml?christian> lists saints days as well as major festivals and has links to further information

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/calendar/holydays.html> has a list of Church of England festivals and commemorations

<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/month00.htm> has Roman Catholic saints days for every day of the year

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/Saints/bydate.asp> sets out Roman Catholic saints days by date and has links to further information

<http://www.pomog.org/saintlist.shtml> has a list of Russian Orthodox saints' days

<http://www.goarch.org/en/chapel/calendar.asp> is from the USA but has links to further information about Greek Orthodox calendar dates

Humanist

<http://www.humanism.org.uk/site/cms/contentViewArticle.asp?article=1341> which has links to further information

January

	Chinese New Year National Storytelling Week at the end of the month
1st	New Year
8th	Death of Galileo
9th	Simone de Beauvoir's birthday
12th	Martin Luther King's birthday
17th	Benjamin Franklin's birthday
19th	James Watt's birthday Auguste Comte's birthday (founder of French positivism)
22nd	Francis Bacon's (philosopher and scientist) birthday
25th	Burns Night(Scotland)

February

	Mardi Gras - Pancake Day
2nd	Death of Bertrand Russell
8th	John Ruskin's birthday (critic and author)
11th	Nelson Mandela released from prison, 1990
12th	Charles Darwin's birthday Death of Immanuel Kant (German philosopher)
14th	Death of Julian Huxley
15th	Jeremy Bentham's birthday (philosopher and social reformer) Galileo's birthday
16th	Giordano Bruno burned as a heretic
22nd	Birthday of Francis Bacon (scientist and philosopher)

March

	Mothering Sunday British Summertime begins UN day against racism World Book Day (www.worldbookday.com) National Science Week (www.the-ba.net/nsw)
3rd	William Godwin's birthday (father of philosophical anarchism & married to Mary Wollestonecraft)
7th	Wordsworth's birthday
8th	International Women's Day
9th	Commonwealth Day
14th	Death of Karl Marx Albert Einstein's birthday
21st	Spring Equinox International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
22nd	World Water Day
25th	Shelley expelled from Oxford University for publishing <i>The Necessity of Atheism</i>
31st	Birth of Descartes

April

7th	World Health Day
11th	Death of Primo Levi (Holocaust survivor)
12th	Galileo imprisoned by the Inquisition, 1633
13th	Thomas Jefferson's birthday
15th	Death of Sartre
16th	Death of Simone de Beauvoir
18th	Death of Einstein
19th	Death of Charles Darwin
22nd	Immanuel Kant' s birthday World Day for Water
23rd	Death of Wordsworth Shakespeare's birthday
26th	Birthday of Marcus Aurelius (Roman Emperoro) Birthday of Leonardo da Vinci
27th	Mary Wollstonecraft's birthday (campaigner for women's rights and married to William Godwin) Freedom Day (South Africa)

May

1st	May Day / International Labour Day
3rd	World Press Freedom Day
4th	T H Huxley's birthday
5th	Karl Marx's birthday NSPCC Children's Day
7th	Sigmund Freud's birthday David Hume's birthday (Scottish philosopher)
8th	International Red Cross and Crescent Day Death of John Stuart Mill (British philosopher and MP)
9th	Europe Day
14th	World Fair Trade Day www.fairtrade.org.uk
15th	International Conscientious Objectors' Day International Day of Families
18th	Bertrand Russell's birthday
20th	John Stuart Mill's birthday

21st	Thomas Paine's <i>Rights of Man</i> banned, 1792
28th	Anniversary of the founding of Amnesty International
30th	Death of Voltaire

June

	Father's Day Dragon Boat Festival (Chinese)
First week	Green Week – see www.yptenc.org.uk and www.eco-schools.org.uk for ideas for making your school greener
2nd	Thomas Hardy's Birthday
5th	World Environment Day
6th	Death of Jeremy Bentham
11th	World Population Day
12th	Anne Frank Day World Day Against Child Labour – see www.ilo.org for information about child labour and children's rights, or www.unicef.org/index.html or www.endchildexploitation.org.uk
mid-June	International Refugee Day and Refugee Week www.refugeeweek.org.uk
21st	Longest Day - Midsummer International Humanist Day Jean-Paul Sartre's birthday
22nd	Galileo condemned, 1633 Death of Julian Huxley
25th	George Orwell's birthday
27th	Death of A. J. Ayer (British philosopher)
28th	Rousseau's birthday

July

4th	Independence Day, USA
8th	Shelley drowned at sea
10th	Anniversary of the Scopes trial in
11th	World Population Day
14th	Emmeline Pankhurst's birthday
18th	Nelson Mandela's birthday

21st	Death of Colonel Robert G Ingersoll
27th	Anniversary of the excommunication of Spinoza (350th in 2006) (Dutch philosopher)

Autumn Term September

	UN International Day of Peace World Maritime Day
8th	International Literacy Day
10th	Death of Mary Wollstonecraft
11th	World Trade Centre , New York , destroyed, 2001
13th	Death of Montaigne (French Renaissance scholar)
15th	Battle of Britain Day
21st	H G Wells ' birthday
21st-23rd	Autumn Equinox. See www.bbc.co.uk/wiltshire/weather/autumnal_equinox.shtml
28th	Confucius' birthday, 551BCE

October

	Harvest National Poetry Day End of British Summer Time World Habitat Day Columbus Day (USA) The People ' s Charter 1839 demands the vote for adult males Inside Justice Week
5th	International Teachers' Day
10th	Women's suffrage movement founded, 1903
17th	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
21st	Trafalgar Day
24th	United Nations Day
29th	Make a Difference Day
31st	Keats' birthday

November

	Thanksgiving Day (USA) - last Thursday in November (www.holidays.net/thanksgiving) International Buy Nothing Day (www.buynothingday.co) Road Safety Week
2nd	Anniversary of the founding of the Samaritans
3rd	Death of Harriet Taylor Mill (Social political philosopher)
4th	UNESCO Day
5th	Guy Fawkes' Night
9th	Fall of Berlin Wall, 1989
11th or nearest Sunday	Remembrance Day
14th	Jawaharlal Nehru's birthday (1 st Prime Minister of Independent India)
16th	International Day for Tolerance
18th	Pierre Bayle's birthday (French Christian scholar)
20th	Universal Children's Day (UNICEF)
21st	Voltaire's birthday World Television Day UNESCO Philosophy Day
22nd	George Eliot's birthday
24th	Evolution Day - anniversary of the publication of Darwin's <i>The Origin of Species</i>
28th	Friedrich Engels' birthday (German social scientist and philosopher)

December

	World Aids Day www.worldaidsday.org/
1st	Rosa Parks arrested for challenging segregation on Alabama buses, 1955 (http://www.rosaparks.org)
2nd	International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
4th	Death of Thomas Hobbes (English political philosopher)
5th	International Volunteer Day
10th	Human Rights Day

12th	Erasmus Darwin's birthday (grand father of Charles Darwin, philosopher, botanist and naturalist)
17th	Beethoven's birthday
22nd	Shortest Day

Islam:

The Muslim calendar is lunar so dates vary each year. The current year can be found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/faith.shtml?muslim>

Twelve religions, including Bahai, Buddhist, Jain, Jewish, Pagan, Rastafar, Shinto, Sikh and Zoroastrian: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar/>

Festivals arranged by month with brief description and links to further information: <http://www.culham.ac.uk/tvr/festcalendar.php>

SOME PRIMARY COLLECTIVE WORSHIP RESOURCES

ISBN TITLE

1854244337 Ideas for Infant Assemblies (with songs!)

0951653784 Cracking Assemblies

1902234154 Cracking Assemblies 2

1859992536 Interactive Assemblies

185999492X Maximus Mouse Primary Assembly Book

028105150X More Christian Assemblies for Primary Schools

1859991890 Ready! Steady! Assembly!

1859993001 Ready Made Assemblies about Famous People

185175167X Timeline Assembly Book

0854767789 100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Children

0854763880 100 Instant Children's Talks

0854767630 100 Instant Ideas for All Age Worship

1854245554 77 Talks for 21st Century Kids

0745934560 Festivals of the Christian Year

0852398276 Big Blue Planet Children's Songbook

0715148680 Jump Up If You're Wearing Red – Children's Songbook

0551040149 Junior Praise Combined Music book

0551026383 Junior Praise Combined Words book

0564045055 Miracle Maker video

VA30710 Storykeepers Education Pack

0745936407 The Day I Fell Down the Toilet (poetry)

1859990363 Rap, Rhyme and Reason

071514913 X The Jesus Files (National Society) Pack of 10
Worship File (National Society)

0719709229 What Shall We Say to God Today? (NCEC)

0862019540 101 Ideas for Creative Prayers

1841011428 Stories, Stories Everywhere by Sandra Pollerman (Barnabas)
Primary Assembly File

1859995896 More Ideas for Creative Prayer

1859994660 Creative Assemblies KS1 – Life of Jesus

1859994105 Bringing Children to Faith

0715149156 Worship! Making Primary School Worship Come Alive by John
Bailey

- From The National Society, 1999

0715149113 Pocket Prayers for Children by Christopher Herbert (comp)

- From The National Society, 1999

0715148788 Pocket Celtic Prayers by Martin Wallace

- From The National Society, 1999

0715148257 Pocket Prayers by Christopher Herbert (comp)

- From The National Society, 1999

0715148370 Pocket Graces by Pam Robertson (comp)

- From The National Society, 1996

1851001328 Praying Their Faith by Colin Johnson (ed)

- From CEM, 1999

185175105 X Don't Just Do Something, Sit There by Mary Stone

- From St Martin's College, Lancaster, 1993
0582067839 Assembly Kit by A Wood
- From Longman / BBC, 1991
0281047928 Christian Assemblies for Primary Schools by Sharon Swain
- From SPCK, 1995
095165373370 Wisdom for Worship by Margaret Cooling
- From ACT, 1995
0947882383 Rainbow Year by Moira Andrew
- From Belair Publications Ltd, 1994
0706244699 Assemblies Round the Year by Beverley Birch
- From Ward Lock Educational Co Ltd, 1985
0721730442 Active Assemblies – For the National Curriculum by Sandra Dinsdale and Anne Tracey
- From Schofield and Sims Ltd, 1991
0713621699 The Tinder-box Assembly Pack by Slvia Barratt
- From A & C Black (Publishers) Ltd, 1982
0713633905 The Green Umbrella by Jill Brand
- From A & C Black (Publishers) Ltd, 1991
0304316997 Guru Nanak and the Snake by Ruth Parmiter and Monica Price
- From Cassell Publishers Ltd, 1989
0855974427 Assemblies for Infants by Rosaleen Faulkner
- From McCrimmon Publishing Co Ltd, 1990
0855974435 Signposts by Chris McDonnell
- From McCrinnon Publishing Co Ltd, 1990
0340531851 Themes for Infant Assembly by Lynne Burgess
- From Hodder and Stoughton, 1991
0080404464 Assemblies for Primary Schools – Autumn Term by Margaret Cooling
- From RMEP, 1990
0080370896 Assemblies for Primary Schools – Spring Term by Margaret Cooling
- From RMEP, 1990
0862018552 Line Up for Assembly by Joanna Pitkin
- From Scripture Union, 1993
0850007292 Activity Assemblies for Christian Collective Worship 5 to 11 by Elizabeth Pierce
- From The Falmer Press, 1991
0750700491 Activity Assemblies for Multi-Racial Schools 5 to 11 by Elizabeth Pierce
- From the Falmer Press, 1992
0862015766 Tell us a Story by Annie Brown
- From Scripture Union, 1990
0563319755 Something to Think About by Paddy Bechely (ed)
- From BBC, 1982
0854219498 Junior Assemblies by Geraldine Witcher
- From Scripture Union, 1982
086201137 X Infant Assemblies by Sheila Davidson
- From Scripture Union, 1983

- 074870089715 Assemblies – Blueprints by Jim Fitzsimmons, Rhona Whiteford
- From Stanley Thornes (Publishers) Ltd, 1989
- 0193217759 The Oxford Assembly Book by June Tillman
- From Oxford University Press, 1989
- 0852768002 Assemblies 5-7 – Ideas Bank by Peter and June Curtis
- From Folens, 1995
- 0852766808 Assemblies 7-11 – Ideas Bank by Louis Fidge and John Williams
- From Folens Publishers, 1988
- The Singing Together Christmas Collection
- From BBC, 1996
- 0281047928 Christian Assemblies for Primary Schools by Sharon Swain
- From SPCK, 1995
- The Primary Assembly Songbook by Gerald Haigh
- From Primary File Publishing, 1996
- The Primary Assembly File
- From Primary File Publishing
- 0563376457 Come and Praise Assemblies by Jo Daykin
- From BBC, 1998
- 0435018302 Assemblies by Harry Smith
- From Heinemann Education Books, 1981

SOME SECONDARY COLLECTIVE WORSHIP RESOURCES

ISBN TITLE

- The Year's Assembly Package (4 quarterly discs – 220 readings)
- From The Physics Shop, PO Box 551, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 2HQ
KS3 Assembly Resource Book
KS4 Assembly Resource Book
In Their Shoes – An Assembly Resource for KS3
Think About It – An Assembly Resource for KS4
Lasting Impression – Assemblies for KS3
Viewpoint – Assemblies for KS4
The Wise Philosopher – The Story So Far
- From Dactyl Publishing, PO Box 26, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7WA,
Tel:
(01777) 860399
1898737193 Shared Values
1898737061 Delivering Collective Worship
- From Courseware Publications, 4 Apple Barn Court, Westley, Bury St
Edmunds,
IP33 3TJ, Tel: 01284 703300
Dinosaurs and All That Rubbish by Michael Foreman
Assembling Citizens (Stapleford)
The Workable Worship Programme for Secondary Schools:
1860835252 - Year 7 }
1860835309 - Year 8 }
186083535X - Year 9 } by Heather Wainman
1860835406 - Year 10 }
1860835457 - Year 11 }
- From First & Best In Education Ltd, Earlstrees Court, Earlstrees Road,
Corby,
NN17 4HH
Secondary Assembly File
0715148125 X Sketches from Scripture by D Haylock
- From The National Society/Church House Publishing (1993)
0721730442 Active Assemblies by S Dinsdale and A Tracey
- From Scholofield and Sims 1991
0862016711 Assembly Point by G Knox and D Lawrence
- From Scripture Union, 1990
0582206391 Get Together by B Piper and F Cooke
- From Longman, 1988
0854393153 Discovering Together by G McCormick
- From St Paul Publications, 1989
000598409 A Word for Your Year by D Moss
- From Collins, 1989
0225666340 Starting Points by J Russi
- From Geoffrey Chapman, 1991

0340397632 Gatherings by B Wild
 - From Hodder and Stoughton, 1987

0340429542 Reflecting by J Thompson
 - From Edward Arnold /Hodder, 1988

071514783 X Worship, Worries and Winners by T Copley
 - From The National Society / Church House Publishing, 1989

0572015135 75 Secondary Assembly Notes by L Baker
 - From Foulsham Ltd, 1989

094807101 X Celebrating One World
 - From CAFOD, 1989

0199171041 Assemblies for Secondary Schools By R and P Hughes
 - From OUP, 1989

0340544384 Many Thoughts by Jan Thompson
 - From Hodder and Stoughton

1854240773 Leading Worship in Schools by J King
 - From Monarch Publications, 1990

0281042659 Prayers for Peace by R Runcie and B Hume
 - From SPCK, 1987

0551021063 Assembly Praise by Tony Castle
 - From Marshall Pickering, 1991

043530240 X The Practical Assembly Guide by Ann Lovelace
 - From Heinemann, 1993

043530241 B 80 More Practical Assemblies by Anne Lovelace
 - From Heinemann, 1995

0091730503 The Lower School Assembly Book by David Self
 - From Hutchinson Education

0199171033 Heroes of the Faith by William Dargue
 - From OUP, 1985

1854241419 52 Ideas for Secondary Classroom Assemblies by Janet King
 (ed) with Heike
 Schwarz
 - From Monarch Publications, 1992

0435800418 100 Readings for Assembly by David Self (ed)
 - From Heinemann, 1993

0435302426 50 Active Assemblies by Peter Norton
 - From Heinemann, 1995

0851004518 Praying Their Faith
 - From CEM, 1999

Breaking the Mould
 - From BBC Education 1996

0748723129 Reflected Values by Roy Blatchford
 - From Stanley Thornes, (Publishers) Ltd 1996

0435302469 Weekly Themes for Assemblies by Paul Grice
 - From Heinemann, 1996

1851751106 Challenges for Living by Ian Stuart
 - From RMEP, 1996

Thoughts for the Day
 - From Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

0340643730 Soundbites by Roberta Karin
 - From Hodder and Stoughton, 1995

1851681418 On Sight and Insight by John M Hull
- From One World, 1997
0316888990 Some Corner of a Foreign Field by James Bentley (ed)
- From Little, Brown & Co, 1992
009999030 X An Evil Cradling by Brian Keenan
- From Vintage, 1992
0857993543 Collected Poems by R S Thomas
- From Phoenix Giant, 1993
0232571908 Sharing the Darkness by Sheila Cassidy
- From DLT, 1998
014026289 X Letter to Daniel by Fergal Keane
- From Penguin & BBC Books, 1996
0571191541 Writing Home by Alan Bennett
- From Faber and Faber, 1994
0907349064 Arthur by Amanda Graham and Donna Gynell
- From Spindlewood, 1984
0062511289 I Dream of Peace by UNICEF
- From Harper Collins, 1994
0003120007 A Tapestry of Tales by S Palmer and E Breuilly
- From Collins Educational, 1993
1859990109 Nuts and Bolts
- From Scripture Union
0862014875 Look into the Bible
1859994296 Inspire Plus CD
1840038071 Collective Worship for Secondary Schools

USEFUL WEBSITES

Resources

<http://www.irinnews.org/> IRIN is a unique humanitarian news and analysis service from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

<http://www.humanism.org.uk/site/cms/contentviewarticle.asp?article=1186> has information about the rights of pupils and teachers regarding collective worship and suggestions for inclusive assemblies.

<http://www.assemblies.org.uk/index.php> has primary and secondary assemblies from the Society for Promoting Christian knowledge (but includes 'other' religions too and has suggestions for festivals).

<http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/> has resources for assemblies including small group resources, larger groups, and current affairs. <http://www.reep.org/cw/index.php> has archived material no longer on the Culham site and can be searched by theme.

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/> has resources for assemblies about third world and social justice issues.

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/> has information about third world and social justice issues; <http://learn.christianaid.org.uk/> has teaching resources, especially <http://learn.christianaid.org.uk/TeachersResources/primary/ResourceOverview/assembly.aspx> which has ready-to-use assemblies primary assemblies and <http://learn.christianaid.org.uk/TeachersResources/secondary/ResourceOverview/assembly.aspx> for ready to use secondary assemblies; <http://www.globalgang.org.uk/> has information aimed directly at students

<http://www.cafod.org.uk/resources/worship> covers much the same ground as Christian Aid from a Roman Catholic perspective.

<http://www.hibbert-assembly.org.uk/index.html> has advice for leaders and resources for various religious and secular themes including suggestions for appropriate music. The Hibbert Trust is Unitarian but inclusive.

<http://www.schoolassemblies.btinternet.co.uk/scripcon.htm> has scripted assemblies on mainly Roman Catholic themes.

http://www.tere.org/primary/collective_worship/index.html has resources for mainly Roman Catholic assemblies.

<http://www.sln.org.uk/storyboard/> has stories from the major world religions and is searchable by religion.

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/rs/pt/wncr/spck/index.php> has assemblies on shared human values as well as those with more specifically Christian themes.

<http://www.assemblingcitizens.co.uk/> is from The Stapleton Trust, an evangelical organisation requiring subscription.

<http://www.creativeproverbs.com/> is a searchable site for proverbs/thoughts for the day around the world.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/> has downloadable programmes (for the 5-7 and 7- 11 age ranges).

<http://www.theotherpages.org/> has 7,000 poems and 28,000 quotations.

<http://www.assemblies.org.uk/rapid/index.html/>

'Rapid response assemblies are provided on the site when there is an event in the news, good or bad, that touches children's lives, so we can offer you a way to acknowledge it in your collective worship.'

http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/hmd_assemblies suggestions for holocaust Memorial Day (January 27th)

<http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/more/assemblies/contents.htm> for primary teachers

<http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/assembly/assembly.htm> several primary assemblies, mainly on shared human values

<http://www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/music/teaching/resources.html#build2> suggestions for music

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/stories/> stories from around the world

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/assemblies/> a bank of over 100 resources written by teachers for teachers. All assemblies can be searched by topic, school type, year group, and/or key word.

<http://www.inspirationalarchive.com/inspirationalstoriesblog/> inspirational stories sent in by ordinary people and of variable quality and relevance

Guidance

http://www.eriding.net/re/documents/worship_works/051123_sholmes_re_worship_works_complete_version.pdf from the East Riding LA has 97 pages of advice on all aspects of planning and delivery including FAQs, guidance about OFSTED, roles of governors, teachers etc., special schools, monitoring and self-evaluation forms, a sample policy, guidelines for visitors, suggested themes and music.

http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/sacre/cw_guidance.aspx Lambeth SACRE's guidance including sample letter to visitors taking assemblies, policy suggestions, Aims, the law, OFSTED.

SUGGESTED THEMES FOR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Achievement
Adventure
Aggression and Hate
Aims and Ambitions
All Saints
Ambitions
A Time for Everyone
Authentic
Autumn
Barriers
Beauty
Beginnings
Big and Small
Blindness and Sight
Books
Bravery
Bridges
Building Relationships
Care and Caring
Challenge
Change
Charity
Children
Choice and Choices
Christmas
Citizenship
Communication
Communion
Compassion
Conservation
Counter-cultural
Courage
Creation
Creative
Day and Night
Democracy and Government
Desert Island Discs
Desmond Tutu sayings
Differences
Disability
Discipleship
Discovery
DNA – valuable and unique
Dreams
Easter
Education and Learning
Education and Life
Enjoyment
Epiphany
Experience
Exploring the Future
Exploring the Past
Faith
Fame
Fantasy
Films I have Seen
Finding your way
Food for thought
Forgiveness
Freedom and Responsibility
Freedom and Slavery
Friends and Friendship
Gifts
Giving Up and Going On
Global Issues
God and Gods
God's World
Good and Evil
Good News
Gratitude
Green Issues
Growing
Guiding Light
Guilt and Suffering
Guinness Book of Records
Handicaps
Happiness Is ...
Hardship
Harvest
Haves and Have-nots
Health
Helping Hands
Heroes and Heroines
Hobbies
Holidays and Travel
Homes and Families
Hope and Despair
Human vices

Human Virtues
 Humility
 Humour
 I believe ...
 If in doubt, say yes
 Illusion and Reality
 Imagination
 Imagine we can't do but we can
 Influences and Indoctrination
 Invitations
 Jesus
 Journeys
 Joy and Happiness
 Joy and Sorrow
 Justice and Fair Play
 Just Thinking about it
 Key People
 Language
 Laws and Rules
 Leaders and Leadership
 Learning
 Leisure
 Lent
 Life and Death
 Life's Challenge
 Life's Ups and Downs
 Light
 Listen
 Living and Loving
 Living with Tomorrow
 Love
 Love and Hate
 Memories and Reflections
 Messages and Messengers
 Method and Madness
 Miracles
 Money and Riches
 Mothering Sunday
 Mother Teresa – small things
 with great love of a person I'll never
 forget
 Muhammad Ali sayings for leaders
 My Favourite Music
 My Favourite Poem
 Myself and Others
 Natural world
 Neighbours
 Nelson Mandela sayings
 New Life
 News
 New School Year
 Newspaper articles
 New Year Resolutions
 Obedience
 Obstacles
 Old Age
 Old and New Blocks
 One World
 Opportunity
 Opportunities
 Optimism and Hope
 Painting
 Parables
 Parents and Children
 Passion narratives
 Passover
 Past and Future
 Peace and Tranquillity
 Personal Qualities
 People I have Met
 Photography
 Pilgrimage
 Places of Worship
 Planet Earth
 Poetry
 Power and Spirit
 Powerful human experiences
 Praise
 Prayer and Meditation
 Prejudice
 Preparations
 Pride
 Proverbs and Sayings
 Rebirth
 Red Letter Days
 Relationships
 Responsibilities
 Reward and Punishment
 Rhyme and Reason
 Riches
 Rights & Responsibilities
 Roots
 Sacrifice
 Saving Life
 School and Community
 School and Opportunity
 School and Tradition
 Science
 Scientists – the more they know,
 the more they don't know

Seeing the Light
Serving and Service
Signs and Symbols
Sound of Silence
Special Books
Special Interests
Special People
Special Places
Stepping Stones and stumbling
blocks
Stories of Great Leaders
Stories from the New Testament
Stories from the Old Testament
Strain and Stress
Strength and Weakness
Success and Failure
Taking Risks
Talk, Talk, Talk
Terry Waite
Thanks
Thanksgiving
The Apostles
The Arts
The Future
The Good Things in Life
The Message
The Natural World
The Outsider
The Still, Small Voice
The Unexpected
The World about Us
Think of a luxury
Things to Avoid
Treasures
Truth and reconciliation stories
Turning Points
Universe at night
Unusual
Us and Them
Victory and Defeat
Views of Education
Visits and Visitors
Voices
Voices from the Past
War and Peace
Wealth
What God doesn't tolerate
What's It Worth?
Why Are We Here?
Windows

Wisdom
Wise and Foolish
Witness
Wonder and Awe
Words, Words, Words
Work and Play
Worship
Youth

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THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY: SOME EXAMPLES

"Deciding to kill blue whales because you need the soap is like deciding to unravel the Bayeux Tapestry because you need the wool." - *Ben Elton*, on why the environment is about the heart as well as the head

"The sea rises, the light falls, lovers cling to each other, and children cling to us. The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out." - *James Baldwin*

Change: "Little men with little minds and little imagination jog through life in little ruts, smugly resisting all changes which would jar their little worlds."
Marie Fraser

"It might be just as offensive to be around a man who never changed his mind as one who never changed his clothes." *country parson*

"Welcome change as a friend; try to visualize new possibilities and the blessings it is bound to bring you. If you stay interested in everything around you—in new ways of life, new people, new places, and ideas— you'll stay young, no matter what your age. Never stop learning and never stop growing; that is the key to a rich and fascinating life." *Alexander de Seversky*

"When you're through changing, you're through". *Bruce Barton*

"We can benefit from change. Anyone who has ever really lived knows that there is no life without growth. When we stop growing, we stop living and start existing. But there is no growth without challenge, and there is no challenge without change. Life is a series of changes that create challenges, and if we are going to make it, we have to grow." *Warren Wiersbe*

"Approach the common people with dignity and they will respect you. Show piety (respect) towards your parents and kindness to your children and they will be loyal to you. Promote those who are worthy, train those who are incompetent." *K'ung Fu Tzu (Confucious)*

"Do not push a wagon up the hill. You will only raise the dust about yourself. Don't think about all your anxieties. You will only make yourself ill." *K'ung Fu Tzu (Confucious)*

"Do not try to cultivate fields too large. The weeds will only grow luxuriantly." *K'ung Fu Tzu (Confucious)*

"The superior man acts before he speaks and, afterwards, speaks according to his actions. The superior man is universally minded and is no partisan. The inferior man is a partisan and not universal". *K'ung Fu Tzu (Confucious)*

"When a command is wrong, a son should resist his father and a servant should resist his master." *K'ung Fu Tzu (Confucious)*

"Don't do to others what you would not like them to do to you." *K'ung Fu Tzu (Confucious)*

"Now chess playing is but a small art but, without his whole mind being given, all his will bent to it, a man cannot succeed at it. Chess Ts'ew is the best chess-player in all the kingdom. Suppose he is teaching two men to play – the one gives to the subject his whole mind and bends it to his will, doing nothing but listening to Chess Ts'ew. The other, although he seems to be listening to him, has his whole mind running on a swan which he thinks is approaching, and wishes to bend his bow, adjust the string to the arrow and shoot it. Although he is learning along with the other, he does not come up to him. Why? Because his intelligence is not equal? Not so." *K'ung Fu Tzu (Confucious)*

"All are equally men, but some are great men and some are little men. How is this? Those who follow that part of themselves which is great become great men. Those that follow the part that is little become little men. To the mind belongs the task of thinking. By thinking it gets the right view of things; by neglecting to think, it fails to do this." *K'ung Fu Tzu (Confucious)*

"Give every man the benefit of the doubt." *The Talmud*

"One good deed invariably leads to another; an evil deed always brings another in its wake." *The Talmud*

"Do not threaten a child; either punish him or forgive him." *The Talmud*

"A classroom should never have more than 25 pupils." *The Talmud*

"When you encounter a child whose head is as solid as iron, you may be sure that his teacher did not have a pleasant way of explaining things." *The Talmud*

"Always begin the lesson with a humorous illustration." *The Talmud*

"There are four categories of pupil: the sponge—he absorbs and retains everything; the funnel— everything that goes in comes out; the sifter— he remembers the trivial and forgets the significant; the sieve — he retains the important and sifts out the incidental." *The Talmud*

"Judge a man not according to the words of his mother, but according to the comments of his neighbours." *The Talmud*

"Love is life. And if you miss love, you miss life." *Leo Buscaglia*

"Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have." *Margaret Mead*

"Until you make peace with who you are, you will never be content with what you have." *Doris Mortman*

"A person who is nice to you, but rude to the waiter, is not a nice person."
Dave Berry

"Marriage is our last, best chance to grow up." *Joseph Barth*

"God could not be everywhere, so He made mothers." *Jewish Proverb*

"Success is more permanent when you achieve it without destroying your principles." *Walter Cronkite*

"Self-delusion is pulling in your stomach when you step on the scale." *Paul Sweeney*

"Be willing to learn new lessons even if they contradict the lessons you learned yesterday." *Ellen DeGeneres*

"To say my fate is not tied to your fate is like saying, 'Your end of the boat is sinking.'" *Hugh Downs*

"When you aim for perfection, you discover it's a moving target." *George Fisher*

"Love of worldly things, like a snake has entangled the whole world in its coils. Whoever holds it lovingly, gets bitten by it." *Guru Amar Das*

"Men put on many strange clothes and wander far away in search of God. But they forget to make their hearts clean. They shall neither find God, nor any happiness after death. O man, be a saint in your own home and follow the Guru's way; practise truth, love and good works." *Guru Ram Das*

"Let us begin to see beyond race, beyond culture, beyond gender, beyond sexual orientation, beyond religion, beyond, beyond all these externals and see each other as God's beloved. When we relate to others as God relates to us, our sense of being God's beloved deepens even more." *Trevor Hudson and Stephen D. Bryant*

The Toolkit included on the following pages is reproduced with kind permission from Bristol City Council SACRE. It can be used to help staff to appraise their Collective Worship provision and will help in highlighting areas for development.

PRIMARY COLLECTIVE WORSHIP (CW) SELF EVALUATION TOOLKIT

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Collective Worship should be an affirmation and celebration of the values and ethos of the school.

ACTION

Collective Worship in a school is 'good' when:

- it is held daily or as often as possible (as space and timetabling allow)
- it is in addition to any secular assemblies
- it is well-planned and aims to be imaginative, inspiring and challenging
- it involves high levels of participation by learners
- it evokes a positive response from those attending
- it is sensitive to the beliefs and traditions of all faiths and none represented in the school, recognising and affirming the family and cultural background of learners
- it makes the act of worship an inclusive activity for all
- it significantly contributes to the development of the social, moral, spiritual and cultural areas of school life

- learners can reflect upon those experiences and questions that take us beyond ourselves, and for some lead to a relationship with or response to God
- it educates learners into the experience of what worship might be
- learners respond to shared human experiences of celebration, happiness, joy, sadness etc
- it celebrates and explores the ethos of the school so that learners can recognise their responsibilities to others and reflect on community and personal values
- it draws on the resources of local faith communities and includes contribution from visitors and school staff
- the themes covered in Collective Worship impact on the life of the school and help children deal with current affairs, locally, nationally and internationally
- it has a positive impact on relationships, attributes, values, teaching and learning

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP (CW) SELF EVALUATION TOOLKIT

Statement	Comment/Evidence	Rating 1 - outstanding 2 - good 3 - satisfactory 4 - inadequate
<p>Legal Considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is Collective Worship held daily for all learners? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If not, how often do pupils take part in an act of CW? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What importance is given to CW in the School Improvement Plan? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the policy/ prospectus inform stakeholders about the nature and purpose of worship in the school? 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many pupils are withdrawn from Collective Worship for any reason? 		
Statement	Comment/Evidence	Rating 1 - outstanding 2 - good 3 - satisfactory 4 - inadequate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are parents informed in the school prospectus of their right to withdraw their child from CW, and is there an invitation to discuss this if necessary with the head teacher? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the governors aware of and involved in the policy and monitoring of CW? e.g. do governors ever attend an act of worship? 		

Statement	Comment/Evidence	Rating 1 - outstanding 2 - good 3 - satisfactory 4 - inadequate
<p>Planning for Collective Worship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there effective planning for Collective Worship with e.g. themes, values, religious festivals, etc? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the planning include opportunities for a range of visitors and for learners to be involved. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a range of approaches used effectively i.e story, drama, puppets, dance, singing – so that worship is enjoyable, challenging, accessible, celebratory, reflective on different occasions? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are parents invited to attend worship on occasions? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How appropriate is the material to the age and stage of development of the learners? • How do pupils talk of feeling included in the act of worship act of worship? 		

Statement	Comment/Evidence	Rating 1 - outstanding 2 - good 3 – satisfactory 4 – inadequate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does planning identify and support the different groups for Collective Worship e.g tutorial or class groups? Is there a variety of provision KS1, 2, whole school, class? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effectively is Collective Worship evaluated and monitored? How are governors kept informed of such monitoring? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well-resourced is the school to assist those who lead CW? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have staff who are involved with Collective Worship attended any recent INSET? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does Collective Worship help children learn about the values of the school community? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you know that CW makes a significant contribution to the SMSC development of learners? 		

Statement	Comment/Evidence	Rating 1 - outstanding 2 - good 3 – satisfactory 4 – inadequate
Learners' Attitudes to Collective Worship How well do learners respond to CW? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they attentive? • Are they responsive to questions? • Do they come in quietly and expectantly? • Do they appear to use the time available for reflection? • Do individuals contribute to prayer times either by impromptu prayer or by live prayer boards/boxes etc 		
How often do learners contribute to CW? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through drama, song and actions, storytelling, puppets • By preparing some elements of the worship • Through making music • Do individual classes have regular input • In a class setting – through deeper discussion and reflection 		
How are the views of learners heard eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • through questions/suggestion boxes/sampling pupil's response after particular acts of worship e.g. • What do you enjoy about Collective Worship? • How could it be improved? 		
		Rating

Statement	Comment/Evidence	1 - outstanding 2 - good 3 - satisfactory 4 - inadequate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are learners able to suggest themes and subject matter, approaches etc? • Are learners able to make connections between the content of worship and impact on school/community life? • Are learners able to connect values and ideas explored in worship with curriculum teaching/ current affairs? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do staff take part in and attend CW and speak positively about the experience? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are pupils and adults encouraged to express their views on CW? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does CW challenge and affirm learners and adults on their own spiritual journey? 		

Statement	Comment/Evidence	Rating 1 - outstanding 2 - good 3 - satisfactory 4 - inadequate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does CW provide opportunities for prayer / reflection / meditation / singing together? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How helpful do members of the school community find such quiet times? Do children speak positively about times of worship? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent do learners from a variety of faith backgrounds feel that their own faith has been recognised, affirmed and respected? 		

SAMPLE ACTS OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

**(The following assemblies were
originally written for Secondary
schools but many can be adapted
for use in Primary schools)**

A New Vision for Humanity's Future

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the kingdom/reign of God where justice, peace and harmony are to be established

The Bahá'í religion started in Persia in the 19th Century. They want to bring all the world's religions together.

This is the sort of world they want to see. As you listen, take some time to reflect on how much you agree with them.

Bahá'ís the world over are dedicated to creating a new and peaceful world civilization based on principles of justice, prosperity, and continuing advancement.

Disunity is the ultimate source of danger and suffering. As national, religious and ethnic conflicts divide peoples around the globe, the imperative of building bonds of reconciliation and understanding takes on greater urgency.

No one should be left out; no one take second place.

Each member of the human race is guided by an inner ethical orientation from God. More than 1,500 grassroots projects in the areas of health, agriculture, education, and environmental preservation are now being undertaken by Bahá'ís throughout the world. These focus on the development of capacities within people themselves.

All the governments of the world must disarm simultaneously. As long as one nation increases her military and naval budget, another nation will be forced into this crazed competition through her natural and supposed interests.

"ZIPOPO" or "The Happy Hippo Show"

This television show was first developed by Shamil Fattakhov, a journalist from Kazan, to promote consultation in youth groups on situations centred around themes connected to moral education. The name of the program, "ZIPOPO," is taken from the first letters of the words "Zaochniy institut pozitivnovo povedeniya," which translates as "The Academy of Positive Behaviour." In English the program is called "The Happy Hippo Show." a title inspired by a story related about `Abdu'l-Bahá, who said to a crying child, "Don't be sad, be a happy hippopotamus!"

The show seeks to present viewers with an opportunity to look at moral or ethical issues and to provide them with the means to approach life problems and find positive solutions through specific dramatic examples.

"ZIPOPO," runs weekly in a number of cities in Russia and is about 40 minutes long. It features a dramatic skit performed by actors, a live audience of between eighty and a hundred people--mostly youth--and hosts who facilitate the discussion. The

hosts begin by warming up the audience and introducing the topic for the show, after which the first scene of a situation based on the topic is acted out. The drama freezes at a crucial point of tension, and audience discussion opens up. Well over two hundred such sketches have now been written and performed, including ones on topics such as how to avoid drug addiction, suicide, the difference between sex and love, youth and the police, stealing, unemployment, racial conflict, divorce, running away from home, how to find the right partner to establish a healthy family life and so on.

A Sikh Red Cross

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings.

In India, there was a powerful series of emperors called the Mughals. They strongly opposed the Sikh religion. Thousands of Mughal soldiers surrounded the Sikh town of Anandpur. They demanded that the Sikhs either surrender or leave the town for good.

The Sikh leader, Guru Gobind Singh refused. He said that the town belonged to the Sikhs and it was unlawful to expel them.

One day, in the thick of fighting, a Sikh man, Bhai Kanhayya, was looking after the wounded. He made no distinction between friend or foe. After the battle, a Sikh complained to the Guru that he had been seen helping the enemy.

The Guru asked Bhai Kanhayya if this was true. Yes, it was true. The Guru asked why. He replied, 'For me, O master, there were no friends and no foes. Their faces were all the same to me. Moreover, you always tell us, "None is my enemy, none a stranger. All human beings are my friends."'

'Well done,' said the Guru, 'you acted like a true Sikh. It is the foremost duty of a Sikh to relieve the sufferings of people without any prejudice whatsoever.'

The Guru fetched various things that would go into a first-aid kit and gave them to Bhai Kanhayya and said, 'Remember, when you give water to the wounded, also apply this ointment to their wounds. By doing so you will be acting as a true Sikh of mine.'

There is a Sikh organisation called 'The Sewa Panthies' that follows this work and helps people on both sides in war. It was started in 1704 – 150 years before the Christian organisation, the Red Cross was founded.

Take some time to reflect what your life would be like if nobody was your enemy, none was a stranger, all human beings were your friends.

Aggression

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the fall, the human capacity for cruelty.

In the early 1960s Stanley Milgram carried out an experiment.

Forty men played the part of teachers and asked students a series of questions.

The student was strapped into an electric chair and the scientist and 'teacher' went into a room where there were thirty switches.

If the student got a wrong answer the 'teacher' was to give them an electric shock. The strength of the shock was increased with every wrong answer.

What the 'teachers' weren't told was that the electric chair wasn't switched on. The groans and screams which came from the other room were not real.

Twenty-six out of the forty teachers were prepared to give shocks marked 450-volts—enough to kill a person—just because another person told them to.

Joy Chadwick wrote about her violent life: 'I would bend people's fingers back to such an extent that they would go down on their knees. I can remember at primary school when a child was annoying me because I was sitting on a dustbin and he was playing around me chasing somebody. I remember calling him over saying 'he's here' and as he came I got hold of his head and banged it against the dustbin; and there were teeth and things everywhere, and I quite enjoyed that experience. It was a sense, of power, and I can have been no more than eight. I think we're born reasonably whole but then we are patterned, and the more we are patterned in the wrong way the more we are open to evil influences.'

Human beings seem to want power and control and to behave aggressively.
That lies behind bullying

An early Christian leader St Paul wrote: 'I do not understand what I do; for I don't do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate.' (Romans 7:15)

Take some time to reflect on these words by some sixteen-year olds:

'I am just made to be angry. Life has been bad for me so why shouldn't I be bad to other people?'

'It's good fun. Being goody-goody isn't exciting, it's boring.'

'I blame my parents. They brought me up like this.'

'I am tempted to do these things by a little voice inside my head.'

All Change

This assembly is suitable for the Jewish festival of Succot, which takes place in early autumn, usually in October. It conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being yet our interdependence.

A Catholic priest called John Newman said that, 'To grow is to change; to be perfect is to have changed often.'

Take some time to think about:

3 things that have changed for you in the last year – like moving house, changing your friends, a new baby in the family.

Think about which of these changes was good; which was bad?

Human beings tend to be afraid of change. They want to go back to the past.

Some people regret the general move to big cities, with all the noise, overcrowding and mess. They wish we could go back to a simpler life in the countryside.

Yet think about it – you might have to get up at 5am, milk the cows, harness the horses and plough all day in clothes that let in the rain.

When the railways were developed, some towns refused to have anything to do with it. Later, they realised the advantages but it was too late – they ended up on a branch line.

For example, Cambridge refused to have the train go near the city. They feared that students would go down to London and live it up, get drunk and not concentrate on their studies. So the railway station is one and a half miles out of the city. The only people who benefit from that are the taxi drivers.

One 'expert' said, 'Railway travelling at speed is impossible. Passengers will be unable to breathe. They will die of suffocation.'

Someone also said that, '...steamships would be unable to cross the Atlantic. They would require more coal than they can carry.'

Two years later, the Great Western crossed the Atlantic.

Ernest Rutherford had just split the atom. He said that the resultant energy was too weak to be of any use. Yet later, from his work, humans created nuclear bombs and nuclear power. Change can be for good or for bad.

The Jewish people are currently celebrating the festival of Succot. They live part of the time in tents. This reminds them that nothing is permanent. Houses don't last, nothing stays the same. They believe that God is in charge so the only thing to trust in is God, not all the other things that don't last.

Ascension Day

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings.

What are you doing here? You didn't have to come into school today.

Well actually not if you were a Christian and you claimed your right to have a religious holiday. Today is a bank holiday in virtually all other countries in the EU.

It's called Ascension Day – ascension means going up.

The story goes that forty days after Easter Jesus took his followers to a mountain where he was surrounded by a cloud and went up to heaven to be with God.

In the past, some people believed it literally. If they'd invented cameras in those days you could film his feet going up into the sky – the first spaceman.

Think about it – beyond the force of gravity. Two thousand years later he would have reached about the middle of the Milky Way.

It's a story. It was written at a time when people thought that the earth was flat.

It's a symbolic story – we use the term 'going up' symbolically too – like 'Next September he will be going up to year 8.' That used to be literal because, in the old days, teachers had all ages in their classes so they have desks on steps. The little kids sat at the front. Each time you went up a year you literally went up to the next step.

We sometimes say that someone has 'gone up in my estimation' after they've surprised you by doing something good.

On Ascension Day, Jesus 'went up' in his friends' estimation. He'd been a good man, had helped people. He was so out of the ordinary that his followers came to believe that he was the son of God. So the story goes that he seemed to have come from God and was now returning to God again.

So what?

Most people want to live a 'fulfilled life'. Most people think that means having a lot of money and lots of possessions. Yet Jesus has no house, no kids, no money, no job, not even his own grave. Yet, Christians say, he lived a fulfilled life – full of God – reaching his potential to the full.

They are saying that the way to fulfilment isn't through what you own but who you are and what you give to others.

Take some time to reflect about what makes you feel happy and fulfilled.

Ash Wednesday/Lent

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting Christian belief and allows reflection on the fundamental questions of life, and focuses attention away from the concerns of the moment to those things which are of eternal concern to human beings.

'Lent' comes from the old English word 'lencten' – lengthen – the days are starting to get longer again after winter.

In the early church, people waiting to get baptised at Easter did their last forty days preparation by fasting/cutting down on food. As time went on, other Christians joined in.

In the run-up to Lent there's Collop Monday, when people used up all the meat in their larders. In 1562, Parliament passed a law forbidding people to eat meat – you could go to prison for three months.

Then on Shrove Tuesday they used up all the eggs – that's how pancakes started. In France and some other countries it's called Mardi Gras – 'Fat Tuesday'. In Germany it's Fastendienstag. In the Caribbean it's 'Carnival' = farewell to meat.

In Ashbourne, Derbyshire they play a particularly violent game of street football. All the windows have to be boarded up.

In Olney, they have a pancake race

Then comes Ash Wednesday. In the old days, people wore sackcloth and sashes to show that they were sorry for the things they had done wrong. Ashes are still put on people's foreheads in many churches today.

Then people fasted until Easter and many still do. It means cutting down on food, giving up alcohol – whatever you choose to do. Some use it as a time to say no – no to drugs, no to crime, no to violence, no to theft, no to making fun of people. No to being pressurised by others when it's hard not to join in because you want to be one of the crowd. You can give any money you save to a good cause like the kidney machine needed by the local hospital, food for the third world.

You can use any time you have to write to an MP, go shopping for a housebound person, collect for charity.

You can also give up things like being rude, gossiping. You can also take on things, like visiting a lonely elderly person, helping more with some of the chores at home.

Why fast? Some people say it helps you to pray and meditate with more concentration. Others say it shows that you have self-control.

Some say it makes you happier. If it was money and lots of material things that led to happiness, how do you account for the fact that the highest suicide rate is in the richest area in the world, Beverley Hills?

Take some time to reflect: If you were going to keep Lent, what sort of things would you give up or cut down on? What things might you take on?

Baked Beans

this conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting Christian belief in human beings' responsibility before God and yet the failure to meet those demands fully; the uniqueness and value of each human being; and the teachings of Jesus, who opposed exploitation.

'Millions of housewives every day
Pick up a can of beans and say
"Beans means Heinz"'

There has been a price war going on in supermarkets over the years.

Another firm in Wigan has tried to undercut the price of Heinz. Sainsbury's own brand has undercut that.

Some see Heinz as old fashioned but the firm advertises an image of trust, targeting the traditional family. Henry J. Heinz was the son of a German immigrant. He pioneered a new genetic strain of tomatoes. He invented baked beans in 1895. In the Ideal Homes exhibition of 1938, beans were displayed in the 'Made in Britain' section.

The Heinz factory was on the German bombing list in World War 2. Heinz invented cans with a heating element for soldiers.

Heinz branched out into making baby food. They promoted an image of purity – but there was too much sugar. Thomas the Tank Engine pasta shapes had so much of it that dentists criticised it for leading to tooth decay.

The supermarket bean war continues. We are spoilt for choice with half an aisle of different brands of beans on offer.

Someone wrote this prayer about baked beans: "Thank you for this tin of beans. It didn't cost much and they tell me that the beans will be good for me.

Thank you for the farmer who grew the beans in the first place. The beans were cheap. I'm sorry if the farmer was not paid enough for his crops.

Thank you too for the miner who dug out the tin from the mine. It is dark and dangerous work. I will remember all those who suffer just to bring me my beans in a tin

Thank you for the printer who printed the label, for the workers in the mill who made the paper, and for the tomato growers.

Thank you for the people work in the factory where the beans were cooked and mixed in with the tomato sauce.

Gosh, what a lot of people helped to bring me this tin of beans.

Thank you for my beans and for the sausages as well".

Bats

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in Creation: issues of ecology, pollution, the stewardship of the earth's resources etc

Some fear them simply because they are bats. Humans have deliberately wiped out hundreds of millions.

They are not pretty to look at but then neither are some of us. They hang upside down but then we've all got some funny habits! They live in dark places in a world we cannot understand.

Then there's the link to blood-sucking. Count Dracula hasn't helped either.

There are almost 1000 species of bats, representing nearly one-quarter of all mammals.

They are like us in many ways: they are warm-blooded, have one baby at a time and suckle their young

They are among the most endangered of all species.

Some bats are smaller than a thimble, but the world's largest, the flying fox, has a 6ft wing-span.

They are very sociable creatures and spend their days in communal caves. One cave in Texas is home to 60 million of them.

There are vampire bats that live on blood - about four teaspoonfuls but they drink from birds by shaving off a small patch of skin with their teeth. Its saliva contains an anti-clotting agent which interests the medical world because it could benefit heart patients.

Bats perform a vital task by keeping the insect population down. A small pipistrelle bat weights just 1/5th of an ounce but eats 3,000 insects every night.

Many fruit-eating bats pollinate plants - bananas, peaches and avocados.

Some also pollinate many shrubs and flowers. For example, the baobab tree in East Africa, also called the "tree of life" and home to many reptiles, mammals and birds, only survives by opening its flowers after sunset, when it knows to expect a bat visit.

Bat droppings, known as guano, is a rich fertiliser.

Bats are not blind, but they do rely more on their ears than their eyes. They have an echo-location system, a kind of radar, which guides them in complete darkness. Even some of the best jet fighters in the world, with their sophisticated radar systems, aren't one per cent as efficient as a bat.

Take some time to reflect what a richly diverse/varied world we live in.

Be yourself

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings

Charles Darwin loved to ride and shoot. He loved hunting birds. He went for long walks studying butterflies and beetles.

His father wanted him to go to a posh school. Charles was bored stiff with Latin and Greek. He went to university. His parents wanted him to be a doctor. But he couldn't cope with blood. When he saw patients strapped to the operating table, when they shrieked as the knife went in and blood squirted out, Charles threw up.

He met a friend with the same interests in birds, beetles and butterflies. They went on a voyage on the ship HMS Beagle for 5 years. They studied the differences between birds in different islands.

He hated arguments and was so sick with worry that his findings would upset people that he waited 16 years before publishing his findings in a book 'The Origin of Species'.

He became ill and lonely in old age yet he had followed his own interests and not followed the path his dad wanted him to follow.

He was one of the greatest scientists ever and is commemorated in Westminster Abbey.

If he had followed his dad's wishes, he'd have been a nobody.

Take some time to reflect: what is your dream, your life's ambition? How might you achieve it?

Brains

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in an underlying purpose to creation and human responsibility for it. It also reflects Muslim belief that human beings are Allah's kaliphs, responsible for looking after the world.

What have humans got that other animals haven't (much)?

Brains – the ability to think and plan.

We don't grow thick, hairy coats. We make them from other animals.

We don't grow long necks. We invented ladders.

We don't see as well as hawks. We make binoculars and telescopes.

We don't run as fast as a large, four-legged animal. We invented bikes and cars.

It took us half a million years to progress from the use of fire to the cultivation of crops and the domestication of animals.

It took ten thousand years to discover and use metals.

It took 2 thousand years to read and write.

1 thousand years to develop explosives.

A few hundred years to develop engines.

100 to tame electricity.

1 generation to harness the atom.

10 years to put a small computer in the hands of anyone who wanted to perform a calculation that would otherwise occupy a mathematician for 1,000 years.

Where will we be in 50 years time?

Will we have blown ourselves up with nuclear bombs?

Will we be flooded because of global warming?

Have we got the brains to get ourselves out of this mess?

Take some time to reflect on practical steps you can take to use your brain to improve the state of the world.

The Butterfly Effect

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings

Several years ago a scientist called Lorenz published a paper entitled: 'Predictability: Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wings in Brazil Set off a Tornado in Texas? He suggested that a very small change can set off a chain of effects that get bigger and bigger. So a tiny thing that seems insignificant, such as the flap of a butterfly's wings, can have a huge impact through a chain of effects it sets off — as extreme as causing a tornado in Texas.

If you are late for lessons you might miss the start of a test and get a poor grade. Your dad grounds you for a fortnight so you miss an important football match and the team is relegated. Your team-mates say you are unreliable so they won't let you play next season.

Everything we do has an effect on others and we may not even be aware of it

If you put some money in a charity box, you are making a huge difference. In developing countries, a child dies of diarrhoea every eight seconds yet the cost of oral rehydration is a mere 10p. Even small amounts of money can have a significant effect.

Think for a moment about the idea that our actions have real effects, for good or for bad.

Climate Change

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in an underlying purpose to creation and human responsibility for it. It also reflects Muslim belief that human beings are Allah's kaliphs, responsible for looking after the world.

One third of land is becoming desert every year. That means we can't grow as much food as we used to. We are losing £64 billions' worth a year. It would cost £4 billion a year for 20 years to put this right. That's the equivalent of two days of the cost of fighting a war.

Our forests will only last about another 30-40 years. That means less oxygen because we need the trees to process carbon dioxide back into oxygen. Trees are cut down to make a fast buck for Burger King and similar companies. That leads to a loss of grazing land as the topsoil is ruined very quickly.

There is enough food to feed the planet's 5.5 billion people. But the richer people don't share. We could put this right for the equivalent of 36 hours' military spending.

13 million children in the third world die each year of malnutrition. That's the equivalent of one jumbo jet full of children crashing every quarter of an hour every day of the year. If we spent £320 per child per year – on injection, on a clean water supply, we could save these lives. The total would come to £40 billion. That's the cost of 20 days spending on war.

Each British person consumes the equivalent of 55 barrel fulls of oil per year; each Bangladeshi the equivalent of half a barrel.

Global warming is leading to extreme droughts, a rise in sea-level, flooding. Bangladesh will lose one-third of its land because of our lifestyle.

Within 40 years, many predict that there will be 400 million environmental refugees. (7 million refugees after World War 2 seemed like a calamity.)

We could reduce global warming by using low-energy light bulbs, using buses and trains instead of cars or car-sharing.

We could put it all right by diverting two and a half weeks of military spending.

If not, we will be living in a very unstable world. It will become too late to save the planet and human beings will die out.

Maybe you will be a grandparent in 50 years' time. What will you say when your grandchildren ask what you did about it?

Could do better?

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings.

School reports used to be much shorter than they are now. Lots of teachers would simply write: 'Could do better.'

Kids would end up not being content. They wanted to be different, somehow.

Buddhism teaches that the reason why people are unhappy is that they always want more than they have. The clue to a happy and fulfilled life is to accept things as they are.

This is a Zen Buddhist story:

A stonecutter was working away cutting stone from a mountain. He was dissatisfied and wished he could do something more important. One day a merchant came by the mountain. He said that he could buy and sell stone and other things and could travel the world.

'I wish I was that merchant,' the stonecutter thought to himself.

His wish was granted instantly

At first he found the life of a merchant exciting, but after a while travelling became tiring, especially when the sun was hot. The sun seemed to be the most powerful thing in the universe. 'I wish I was the sun.' said the ex-stonecutter and suddenly he was. He shone brightly and was very happy until a cloud came along and blocked out his light. 'Clouds seem to be more powerful than the sun. I wish I was a cloud.'

As a cloud he floated happily until he came to a mountain range. He couldn't pass over the mountain. The mountain was strong and unmovable. 'I wish I was a mountain.'

As the mountain he stood tall and strong, but he soon became aware of something chipping bits of him away. The mountain was powerless to do anything about it. He looked down and saw a stonecutter. 'I wish I was a stonecutter.' he said and found himself back where he started.

This time he decided to be content with what he was!

Take some time to reflect:

Is it right to accept things as they are?

Maybe it depends – we should not, perhaps, accept bad things like greed and prejudice.

Maybe we are told, 'Be yourself.' Which self? Your 'best self'?

Friday 13th

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief about an underlying purpose to creation and human responsibility for it. It allows reflection on the fundamental questions of life, and focuses attention away from the concerns of the moment to those things which are of eternal concern to human beings.

How many people say, 'Touch wood?'

How many people feel that it's lucky if a black cat crosses your path?

Some people think that today is unlucky because it's Friday the 13th. Why? Because Jesus died on a Friday and there were 13 people at his last supper.

Some people think it's unlucky to walk under a ladder. (It's connected to the ladder they put up against the cross to take Jesus down when he died.)

Some think it is good luck to spill some salt. (This is connected to Judas, the betrayer, being at Jesus's last Supper.)

If they break a mirror, some think it will be followed by seven years of bad luck.

Some think that if you put a mirror under your pillow, you will dream about a lover.

Of if you walk around a graveyard 12 times at midnight you will see the ghostly shape of a lover.

In Egypt, you can get a love potion to make your marriage last. It is made of hair, nail-clippings, the juice of plants and animals' blood.

In ancient Rome it was made of a wolf's tail, pigeon's blood, the bones of a toad and an animal's entrails.

Some get a dandelion and blow off the petals. Then they then pick the ones that are left with the alternating words, 'He loves me. He loves me not.' You cannot control love. This is a way of trying to control it.

It's supposed to bad luck to kiss someone on the nose. It will lead to a quarrel.

Love bites are supposed to be bad luck because they are connected with vampires.

An engagement ring is put on the third finger in the mistaken belief that it leads straight to the heart.

If there is an ink blot on a letter, it means someone is thinking of you.

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If you burn a letter it's supposed to be bad luck so tear it up instead.

When people throw confetti at a newly-married couple is it supposed to result in them having lots of children.

On the honeymoon, the first to fall asleep is supposed to be the first to die. It's bad luck to propose marriage on a train or a bus.

At a wedding, if you drop the ring the marriage is doomed to an early end.

If you catch the bride's bouquet of flowers you will be married within the year.

Take some time to think:

Is the world dependent on luck?

Or can you change things?

For example, if you want to pass your exams, which is more likely to help: seeing a black cat? Having a lucky horseshoe? Doing some revision?

If there is a God who is in control of everything – how come people were gassed in concentration camps? Why didn't this God intervene?

Friends

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings.

There is a programme on the radio called Desert Island Discs. A famous person is asked what records he would like to take with him if he was shipwrecked and had to live on his own on an island.

Most people select records which bring back memories of important friends in their lives.

We sometimes get fed up with people, but it must be awful to spend the rest of your life without anybody to talk to.

In the book 'Robinson Crusoe', a man was on a desert island and he survived very well. He got food, water and shelter, but the one thing he missed was having somebody to talk to.

His life became much better when he met 'Man Friday'.

We all need friends. Even the little child, who relies so much on his carers, starts to find other people of his own age to play with.

As we get older, we rely on our friends so much that we even prefer their company to that of our carers sometimes.

The problem pages of teenage magazines are full of letters like this:

"Dear Marge,

Although other people seem to have lots of friends, I have no person I could really count a friend. The last friend I had was always criticizing me and so we broke up. Can you help me?" *Lonely, London NW11*

Just take a minute to think about all the friends you've had. Also think about people who have no friends. What could you do to help?

Hannukah

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in God's purpose for a just and harmonious world and allows reflection on the fundamental questions of life, and focuses attention away from the concerns of the moment to those things which are of eternal concern to human beings.

[Props: tallit (prayer shawl), kippah (skull-cap), menorah (7-branched candelabra) or a hannukiah (9-branched candelabra) and candles. You could also use doughnuts or latkes – fried potato pancakes as these are traditional treats for this festival as they are made with oil; or a dieldel – a spinning toy that children play with which has Hebrew letters to remember the miracle of the oil lasting 8 days.]

Happy Hannukah! Some people call it the 'Jewish Christmas.'

In the Second Century BCE Alexander the Great invaded Israel. He and his fellow Greeks were fairly tolerant of the Jewish religion. A bit later, along came a ruler called Antiochus. He was a megalomaniac, that is, he was really full of himself.

He called himself 'Epiphanes'. That means he thought he was a manifestation of God. He put up a statue of himself in the Jewish temple. Remember, one of the Jewish commandments forbids such 'graven images'.

Not content with that, he commanded that pigs be sacrificed to his statue. Remember that the pig is an unclean animal as far as Jews are concerned. As far as the Jews were concerned, the temple had been desecrated – unfit for use.

The hero of the story is Judas Maccabaeus. His second name means 'hammerer'. He got together an army who fought to get rid of the invaders.

They succeeded. They then set about making the temple fit for use again. One of the signs that the temple was fit for use was an 'everlasting lamp'. The trouble is that there was only enough olive oil left to burn in the lamp for one day. It would take eight days to get more supplies from Bethlehem. Should they light the lamp and then let it go out again? Or wait a week and light it then?

The legend goes that they lit the lamp for one day but that it lasted a whole eight days until fresh supplies of olive oil arrived.

So today, Jews light one candle on the first day of the festival, two on the second, three on the third and so on. An extra candle is also lit each night (at the front of the hannukiah) called the shamesh or servant candle. It is lit first and used to light the others. If you are good at arithmetic, you might like to work out how many candles they would get through by the end of the eighth day.

Take some time to reflect about Judas Maccabeus. He stood up to a bad government. What bad things might a government do in this country? What things would you stand up for? Would you be prepared to fight and risk your life? What for?

I want

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting Buddhist belief and allows reflection on the fundamental questions of life, and focuses attention away from the concerns of the moment to those things which are of eternal concern to human beings. It is suitable for any Buddhist festival.

Hold up a series of adverts – or show a video clip/DVD of TV adverts.

If you could have any of the things you wanted, what would you have?
Pause for reflection.

These adverts shape our wants, give us ideas. 'Oh, I must have.....'

This week is very important for Buddhists.

The Lord Buddha started off in life as a very rich prince. He could have anything that he wanted. But he got very bored with it all.

He said that the reason we get unhappy is because we want too much. And when we can't have it, that makes us unhappy.

He said we should see the world differently. We should be grateful for what we already have – our lives, friends, flowers.

Take some time to think about the things you already have and how thankful you are for them.

Jewish New Year

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in an underlying purpose to creation and human responsibility for it.

Props: A shofar (ram's horn), tallit (prayer shawl), kippah (skull-cap)

Happy New Year! Yes really. It's the Jewish New Year.

Jews look back. Back to the creation of the world. Back to God's plan. Then they ask, 'What have we done?' The plan for peace has resulted in wars. The plan for a good environment has turned to global warming. The plan for equality has turned to gross inequality between rich and poor countries.

Jews look forward to the end of the world and to their own deaths and ask, 'What has my life given to the world? Will the world miss me? Or rejoice that I've gone?'

In the Bible, it is said that a trumpet will herald the end of the world. This is the trumpet it was thinking of – a ram's horn.

This reminder of the end starts a ten day period of self-examination. Reflection of your own sins – neglecting your family, not enough exercise. Also corporate sins – things we are all responsible for – global warming, famine, poor housing.

The end of the ten days is called Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement.

Jews spend all day in the synagogue fasting, confessing their sins. Everything is white – the prayer shawls, the rabbi's gown, the curtain in front of the ark, the scroll covers.

There is a legend that the red blood over the altar in the temple turned white. There is also a verse in the Bible that says: 'Though your sins are as red as scarlet, you shall be made as white as snow.'

So what?

It strikes me as a good idea to take stock, to ask yourself, 'Where am I going?'

Perhaps you would like to take some time to reflect:

Am I working to the best of my ability?

How do my parents, my friends see me?

Am I looking after my body?

Do I help other people?

The Lion Cub

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings.

There is a Hindu story about a lion cub whose mother died shortly after it was born. The cub found herself completely alone in the jungle, without the faintest idea who she was and what she ought to be doing. She spent the first few days of her life wandering around the jungle totally confused. Eventually she came to the very edge of the jungle and saw a flock of sheep grazing in a field. These sheep were the first animals she'd come across and she was delighted to see that she wasn't the only creature wandering around. However, this chance meeting simply added to her confusion because she began to identify herself with the sheep. She ran in amongst them, joined the flock and took on their identity.

She spent the next few months doing the sorts of things that sheep are supposed to do in order to lead a happy life. Despite enormous effort the cub wasn't very happy. Hanging around in fields made the other sheep happy but it left her feeling totally bored and dissatisfied. Leaping around in springtime didn't do much for her either. Eating grass all day left her with a deep inner hunger and a withered looking body.

She began to feel then that there was something deeply wrong with her way of life. Something very important was missing. If she could only find it then she too might also be happy. But she had no idea where to look so she decided to play safe by staying put.

This didn't last long because, one day, while grazing in its field she bumped into a full grown lion. This lion immediately took pity on the cub's hungry looking body, seizing her by the neck, taking her into the jungle and plunging her head into the warm body of a dead deer. The cub found her identity. The taste of warm blood and fresh meat at once made it clear to her who she was and what it she must eat in order to be satisfied.

Just like the cub wasn't satisfied with grass, many people say we're not satisfied when we fill our lives with stuff – TVs, freezers, a wife even, microwave, car, 2 cars, etc. We work hard to make money to buy things – then we retire – what then?

Hindus say that we have a little bit of God inside each one of us. The chief aim in life isn't to stuff ourselves with material possessions but to find this bit of God inside us and inside other people. Then we live fulfilled lives, we reach our true potential.

Take some time to reflect – if there is a part of God inside you and inside other people, how would this affect the way you treat your body, treat others, live your life?

Living in a Material World

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the kingdom/reign of God: where justice, peace and harmony are to be established

Mark's bedroom is his life. It has its own TV and fridge.

At the age of sixteen, he has agreed to tidy his room in exchange for a £50 a month allowance. He charges £10 to cut the grass and £10 to clean his dad's car.

He was worried that his grandparents' Golden Wedding Anniversary would force him to miss one of England's football matches in the World Cup.

He is one of a lifestyle survey of ten thousand children aged six to sixteen.

It found that British teenagers are the most materialistic of anywhere in Europe.

Only 25% of British 15 and 16 year-olds believe that a happy family life will be the most important thing when they grow up. Compare that with 51% of Italians, 43% of Swedes and 37% of French youngsters.

Young Britons are obsessed with their careers. 34% put getting an interesting job first. Compare that with 31% of the French, 25% of the Germans and 11% of the Swedes.

18% of British youth rated education as most important, compared to 11% of Swedes, 10% of the Germans, 4% of Italians and 3% of French.

One 13-year-old girl said, 'Spending money on myself is the number one thing I need in life to be happy.'

For 46% of British 15-16-year-olds, wearing the right clothes scores 49%, ahead of being helpful or kind (29%).

Only 9% thought that having friends was important, compared to 16% of Swedes.

Boys were reluctant to let people know if they helped anyone. 'Boys often fear they will be labelled cissy if they admit to doing volunteer work.'

Jesus said, 'Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added as well.' In other words, put your heart into making the world a better place, a place of justice, fairness and peace and all these material things will come too.

Take some time to reflect on the things that make you happy. What do you most want out of life?

Milk or blood?

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief about human beings' responsibility before God and yet the failure to meet those demands fully.

Guru Nanak is one of the leaders of the Sikh religion. He lived just over 500 years ago. There is a story about how he arrived in a town called Saidpur and went to the house of a poor man called Lalo.

This was unheard of because Nanak came from a high caste background and people didn't believe he should eat food with a poor man, so a rich man came to persuade him to eat with him instead.

Nanak asked both men to give him a loaf of bread. He took the rich man's bread first and squeezed it. Blood came out of it.

Then he took the poor man's bread and squeezed it. Milk came out of it.

The main point of the story is that Sikhs don't believe in caste; that is they don't believe that some people are better than others just because of the families they were born into.

But there's another point. Blood came out of the bread from the rich man. This suggests that he had become rich by the blood of others, by exploiting the poor, by paying them low wages.

Lots of the food we eat today is cheap because people have been exploited on low wages to produce it.

Asda/Walmart is one of the supermarkets that has been criticised for providing cheap food by exploiting the workers. Inspectors found:

3,587 of its factories displayed "high risk" violations, such as failing to pay workers legally required overtime premiums.

187 factories were banned from producing for Wal-Mart for one year, after being rated "high risk" for two successive years.

36 factories were found to be employing "one or two" underage workers.

18 factories were permanently banned from doing business with Wal-Mart, after "egregious (=shocking) violations" were found.

Take some time to reflect – what it would be like to treat everyone equally, regardless of their background? What it would be like if we checked out things before we purchased them – to see if the workers were paid a decent wage to produce them? Would you be prepared to pay a little extra to make sure that was the case?

On the buses

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in an underlying purpose to creation and human responsibility for it. It also reflects Muslim belief that human beings are Allah's kaliphs, responsible for looking after the world.

Bristol was one of the first cities to introduce bus lanes - Cheltenham Road was the first in 1973.

A single deck bus carries, on average, the same number of people as 22 cars.

If only five per cent of current car journeys were made by bus instead, a quarter of a million tonnes per year of pollutant emissions could be eliminated.

Buses are greener because they emit only one per cent of the pollutants from road transport. (buses = 2 parts per thousand of carbon monoxide, cars = 20-30)

Buses provide one twelfth of the nation's road passenger miles using only a thirtieth of the fuel consumed by road transport.

Buses use far less fossil fuel per passenger mile compared with an average car, a single deck bus will do an extra 360 passenger miles for every gallon of fuel consumed.

Buses are the safest form of road transport. (For every 100 million passenger kilometers traveled, nine car users have suffered fatal or serious injuries to every two bus or coach passengers)

Every day there is an average of 26 miles of road space taken up by new cars.

Take a moment to reflect – if you are concerned about global warming, do you travel to school in the best way?

Plastic Surgery

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings.

What do you think when you look in a mirror?

American plastic surgeon Maxwell Maltz wrote a book about his patients. They thought that facial plastic surgery would open the door to a new life but often ended up feeling that they were failures. They might look beautiful on the outside but they acted like ugly ducklings. They had new faces but old personalities.

'I look the same as before. You didn't change a thing.' They might say, even though photos of 'before' and 'after' showed the truth to be different.

The way we look at ourselves and feel about ourselves deep down is the way we will become.

The Bible says, 'As he thinks in his heart, so is he.' (Proverbs 23)

How do we form opinions about ourselves?

From what our parents say. If we get a report and it's all Cs we get told to try harder.

Suppose we do and we get Bs. They say, 'Why didn't you get As?'

And if you do get As? 'Well I know those teachers. They all give As. Standards aren't high enough!' Or, 'Well done! What's that stain on your pullover?'

Real love is unconditional – that means people love you regardless. The opposite is conditional love – you are only loved if you measure up to certain conditions. For example, a girl, let's call her Shirley, gets told by her parents, 'You are so nice when....' Or, 'Shirley, I hope you'll never act like Sally down the road.' 'That's fine, Shirley, but....' 'We love you when...if...but...' So many conditions.

These conditions make us oversensitive. Like the man who stopped going to rugby matches because every time the players got into a huddle he thought that they were talking about him.

Families and teachers are a bit like mirrors. They affect the way we view ourselves and the way we treat others.

The good thing is that it makes us try harder to make progress, that we see how unfair the world is and we might make an effort to improve it.

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The bad thing is that it can lead to depression, make us judge others and run them down, bring up our kids in the same way in which we were brought up.

Some religions seem to say that God's love is conditional. We are all sinners. God does not accept that there is any difference between a little sin like swearing and a big sin like a terrorist blowing people up with a bomb.

That is not the kind of God the Bible talks about, where it says that he made each one of us, that our faults are what makes us struggle and grow.

When Jesus told his followers to be 'perfect' the Greek word actually means 'whole' – be healthy: whole. To do that, we need to love ourselves because we can never, ever love other people otherwise.

Take some time to reflect on the bad things people have said about you...then about the good things people have said about you. Think about the bad things you have said to others....and the good things.

Potential

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings.

A little boy went into a sculptor's workshop. He saw a huge block of marble.

Some time later he went again and there was a huge lion.

He asked the sculptor, Michaelangelo, 'Sir, how did you know that there was a lion underneath the marble?'

You are like a block of marble. Your parents, friends and teachers are like the sculptor.

For example, one boy was always getting into fights at school. He never did any work in lessons. His teachers gave up on him – except for a drama teacher who gave him a part in a school play. The boy had to learn to work in a team. If he was in a bad mood, the play would be a flop. He did his best and the play was a success.

Another example – a boy couldn't read or write very well. He was very shy so he had no friends. One teacher sent him on an outward bound course. Climbing a mountain, roped with others, one of the boys became scared and couldn't move. The shy boy talked and listened and, eventually, persuaded him that it was OK. The report said he had 'leadership qualities'.

We all have hidden talents. There is a lion underneath all of us.

Reflect for a while - do you sit back, watch TV and do little? Or are you prepared to have a go, try new things, take opportunities?

Ramadan

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting Muslim belief and allows reflection on the fundamental questions of life, and focuses attention away from the concerns of the moment to those things which are of eternal concern to human beings.

I wonder how many of you have had breakfast.

Sweets on the way to school?

Will have more sweets at break.

Lunch.

Sweets after school.

Supper/tea/dinner when you get home.

Some people treat their bodies like dustbins – they fill them up, get fat, are a prey to heart disease, eat too many chips and gets acne/zits.

Then they try slimming/diets.

Islam is the world's second biggest religion. At the moment, Muslims are keeping Ramadan. They fast – go without food or drink from sunrise to sunset.

Why? Because it's one of the five main things in their religion. They also see it as a discipline, like an athlete in training.

It's also a way of understanding a little of what it might be like to live in the poorer parts of the world.

It's also a protest at our consumer society that encourages us to want more and more with adverts for TVs, washing machines, fast cars, computers.

All these adverts assume that you are the centre of your own universe, that the universe exists to supply all your wants.

When Muslims pray, they are saying that Allah/God is the centre of the universe.

Take some time to reflect on all the things you think you want. Do you really need them to be happy? How much of your life is dominated by things rather than people – friends and family.

Riddles

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings

What has 6 legs and 22 balls?

A year ten student came out with what most people think of as a racist joke, in poor taste: Why did Hitler commit suicide? Because he couldn't afford the gas bill.

Kids tend to laugh, adults are shocked. Yet that was a Jewish joke.

Riddles are as old as the human race – part of basic science, a desire to ask, to find out.

Some of the oldest riddles come from a Babylonian (from what we now call Iraq) wax tablet 3,000 years ago.

Who becomes pregnant without conceiving? Who becomes fat without eating? A rain cloud.

Then there was Homer in Classical Greece: What we caught we threw away. What we could not catch we kept. Body lice.

In the Qu'ran: The Queen of Sheba kept asking King Solomon riddles.

There's an Anglo-Saxon riddle book in Exeter Cathedral library. 'I saw a creature: his stomach stuck out behind him, enormously swollen. A servant waited upon him. What filled up his stomach had travelled from far and flew through his eye. He does not always die in giving life to others but new strength revives his stomach, he breathes again. – a pair of bellows

Then there are puns:

What's the difference between a cat and a comma? A cat has claws at the end of its paws; a comma has its pause at the end of a clause.

The 1511 Chester 'Book of Merry Riddles: Which part of a sergeant (police man) do you like pointing towards you? His heels.

What is that which lords keep in their pockets and beggars throw away? The snot from their noses.

Then there are straightforward ones: What smells most in a science lab? Your nose.

What's long, green and goes round the garden at 50 miles per hour? A cucumber on a bicycle.

Some are cruel: Earl Mountbatten was blown up at sea and the riddle was: How do you know that Mountbatten had dandruff? They found his head and shoulders at the back.

There was a lifeboat that sunk at Christmas: What goes down well at Christmas? The Penlee Lifeboat.

General Galtieri headed up Argentina in a war against Britain where several of his ships were sunk and planes were shot out of the sky. Why did Galtieri buy a glass-bottomed boat? So that he could review his air force.

Why are so many riddles cruel and in bad taste? If you don't laugh you would cry.

The cruellest jokes are often told by those who have suffered the most. That's why many of them are Jewish jokes.

Riddles show intelligence.

Jokes show a balanced personality – people who can survive bad luck.

A well-developed sense of humour means a well-balanced personality. The better adjusted you are, the more readily you will respond to humour in jokes, cartoons and in everyday situations. Maladjusted people show a far greater tendency to miss the point in a joke and to take things too seriously which are meant to be funny. The ability to get a laugh out of everyday situations is a safety valve ridding you of tensions which might otherwise damage your health.

This is a prayer about humour, written by an elderly Jewish man:

Lord _you have a minute? _this is serious.
I want to be serious about being funny.
Humour, Lord. The sense of.
Not included in the five senses as a rule.
Overlooked; not counted; taken for granted,
Not included in the senses census.
(Play on words, Lord, ignore it.)
Overlooked, Lord? The sense of humour?
The other five are but the servants
of the overlooked one!
A touch of Heavenly genius, Lord!
That extra gift, of humour.

Of infinite variety you made us,
Of every shape and colour.
Which would suggest, dear Creator,
upon looking around, that you
have a pretty solid sense of humour yourself.

You were fair; all shapes
and colours to have the same
basic components,
So many arms and legs and so on.
Sound and careful work.
Work of the sixth day.
And you were pleased with your work.
'Good!' you said. And on the next day rested.
I have the feeling, Lord,
That you gave us the humour later.
A modification, to make us behave better.
For we didn't give you too much joy at the beginning, did we?
Or later either for that matter, did we?
How could you bear us?
Yes, later came the humour.
More bearable, a person with humour,
I've noticed it myself.
(Humour didn't *evol*ve, my scientists; the Sense was *given*.)

Now, Lord, to the point, to be serious.
A thought occurs lately, which
leaves behind it a little worry.
Mind you, dear Friend, as the years pass,
many thoughts have a dusting of worry.
No matter; to the point.
Can humour lose power, Lord?
Can it tire, like the other senses?
Is it like an optic nerve, or a taste bud,
or an inner ear, or the wondrous parts that feel and smell?
Does it weaken a little, as they can?
Seems reasonable to assume so,
But to me, more worrying, sort of.

Lord, there are no bifocals for the Sense;
no hearing aid, no wheelchair.
If, Lord (and this is the worry), the humour goes, if the Sense weakens,
I'm not sure I can stay the course.
Don't misunderstand me, Lord, I'm
grateful for every day you give me.
But every day you give me, Lord,
as I look around, and see a little clearer, and understand a little more,
It seems to me, Lord, I need a stronger Sense, not a weaker!

Lord, if I am down in your books to live long, to be an Elder,
My thanks, believe me, my thanks.
To live is good.
Even to be creaky and hard-of-hearing and bi-focal'd and wheelchair'd is
better than to be dead.
My thanks, dear Friend, my thanks.

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Reduce my faculties as you will, but if it is no trouble, can I have the Sense full-strength, for the full time?

(You Have a Minute, Lord – David Kossoff [Pan 1978] pp. 84-86)

So, what has 6 legs and 22 balls? A billiard table.

Save the Whale

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in an underlying purpose to creation and human responsibility for it. It also reflects Muslim belief that human beings are Allah's kaliphs, responsible for looking after the world.

For a humorous musical start: 'The Whale by John Tavener
Or 'The Last Leviathan' – Richard Quinn

Whales are the largest creatures our world has ever known. They've been around for 40 million years. In the Bible, they are called Leviathan (sea monster)

The greatest recorded length of a blue whale is 110 feet. At birth, a baby whale might be as long as 28 feet.

In 1947, a female blue whale was caught by a Japanese Whaling Fleet. They weighed it and dismembered it and noted as follows:

Measurement 89 feet
Weight 134 tons
Blood 8 tons
Skeleton 18 tons
Heart 1,300 pound
Lungs 14 tons
Tongue 3 tons
Skull 4- tons

Some whales can dive to depths of a mile without discomfort. One whale can hear the sound of another one 300 miles away.

Whales are in danger of becoming extinct. Modern whaling is big business. Large whaling fleets roam the sea in search of their prey. These fleets are equipped with sonar radars light aircraft helicopters, fast whale catching vessels, and long range explosive harpoons.

Whales are slaughtered to provide oil and meat. Whale products range from margarine, shampoos, perfumes, soaps, lipsticks, shoe polish, floor polish, varnish paint, fertilizer and paint.

Yet all these things can be made in other ways. They don't need to kill the whales.

You can't guarantee to kill a whale quickly and painlessly. The whale is often killed by a 160 lb., six foot long, iron harpoon. It is shot from a 90mm cannon. The harpoon strikes the whale at 60 m.p.h. It penetrates deep into the whale's body. Seconds later, a grenade—like charge in the head of the harpoon

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explodes inside the whale, causing terrible injuries. This rarely kills outright. Some whales have survived for two hours, in terrible pain. Most whale catchers don't want to waste another harpoon to put a whale out of its misery.

There are laws laid down by the International Whaling Commission. But the organisation has no power to enforce penalties on those who disobey - it's voluntary.

Take a moment to reflect on what might be done to improve the situation.

Slavery

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings

When was slavery abolished? 1707? 1807? 1907? The official answer is 1807.

Who led the fight against it? William Wilberforce? Elizabeth Fry? Cliff Richard? The official answer is William Wilberforce.

I say, 'The official answer.' In fact slavery has not yet been abolished.

In some parts of India there are 50 million children who start work at the age of 6. They begin their work at 2am. They don't go to school; they have no time to play; working in bangle factories, in electro-plating, frequently dipping their hands into acid baths.

If you wear a bangle or bracelet, check to see if it says where it was made.

Some work in a glass factory. Their lungs get damaged, they lose their eyesight and their growth is stunted.

In Thailand, a quarter of the work force is aged between 10 – 14. You might see a doll with a tag, 'Made in Thailand'.

In Thailand, ten thousand babies are stolen from prams. 400 last year were sold for adoption, many were forced to be prostitutes.

In the Sudan, some mothers are so poor that they sell their babies for £20 – according to their weight. That's one sixth the price of a rifle.

They have to pay off the debts of their grandparents. They can't buy themselves out of slavery when they grow up. It might cost as little as £10 to redeem themselves but they can never afford that much money.

According to the United Nations Declaration on Human rights, 'All human beings are born free and equal, entitled to freedoms without distinctions of race, colour, sex, language, religious, political or other opinion. They have free choice of employment and to just and favourable conditions of work and protection against unemployment.'

Yet there are twelve-year-olds working 16 hours a day with only half an hour's break and pregnant women going down coal mines up to the moment that they go into labour.

If they have an accident at work, they get paid no compensation. They get no holidays, they are called 'hands' – a living tool, not human beings. They are laid off the moment they are no longer needed.

There are an estimated 200 million slaves around the world.

It was pretty tough in this country too, in the past.

One 95 year old man remembers back to when he was aged 13. He started work at a coal mine at 4am. It was a 2 ½ mile walk to the coal face. Some started working there as young as 10.

A woman still alive, aged 102 did not have much schooling. The only job she could get was as a maid, constantly being told, 'Do this, do that.' She had to dust, clean shoes cook. She started work at the age of 14. Her day began at 5.30 am. She had no holidays.

There have been clubs to protect workers going right back to the Middle Ages – trade guilds like St. Nicholas, patron saint of sailors.

Farm labourers in Tolpuddle, Dorset, started a club where everyone put in a little money out of their wages so that if one of them fell on hard times they could be helped.

Trade unions have helped bring about laws against unfair treatment or harassment at work, redundancy payments to tide you over if you get the sack, funds to pay your solicitor if you get into a dispute with the boss, compensation for accidents at work, sick pay, maternity leave.

Things have got better – yet TV star Dennis Waterman said, 'The most disturbing thing of all is that although slavery is going on in other parts of the world, it is still very much to do with us. Although we say we're against it, it is our economic demands that are basically keeping people, particularly children, in slavery in the third world.'

Every cup of tea we drink has been made possible by slaves. In India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, children get involved in picking at the age of 7.

In South India, many 5-year-olds work 12 hours a day for 20p a day.

Take some time to reflect on how much you value your freedom.

Swimming

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in human beings' responsibility before God and yet the failure to meet those demands fully. One demand is to be 'authentic'. Christians use the term 'sin' to mean 'missing the mark' – like an arrow missing the target, people can be less than fully alive and fail to meet their potential.

How many of you can swim?

I was brought up by the seaside and we had lessons at junior school but I was a wimp. We went on the end of the beach where there was a lot of shingle and, as a seven-year-old, I didn't like it. I got my mum to write sick notes to get me off PE lessons, claiming to have a headache or whatever. So I didn't learn to swim.

When I was in my thirties, a friend persuaded me that I ought to learn. It would do me good. I joined a sports club with a pool. I felt just as frightened as I did all those years ago. I didn't want to put my head under the water. I was frightened I would swallow lots of water. I was scared of what others might think.

I had to trust my friend. Trust her that she would support me until such time as I could do it myself.

Back in the Fourth Century, someone went to a sort of guru in the desert and asked for some wise teaching.

The guru told him to go to a cemetery and curse the dead.

He stood among the graves and shouted, 'You wicked men. The stink of your sins is an offence to heaven. I curse you with all my power. May you never see the light again.'

Then he went back to the guru. 'Did the dead say anything to you?'

'Not a word.'

'Now go and praise the dead.'

He went back to the cemetery. 'You are greater than the saints. You inspire those of us who are still alive with your great deeds. May you see heaven.'

He returned. 'Did the dead have anything to say?'

'They were silent as before.'

'This is how you have to be – like the dead. – unaffected by the opinions of others. But you will not be dead. You will be really living for the first time.'

Don't worry about what others think. Be yourself. You'll find that you'll be more liked than if you wear a sort of mask and try to please everyone.

If you let yourself go, you'll enjoy life more.

It's a waste of time to spend your whole life wishing that you were someone else.

Take some time to think about what you would really like to do but you are afraid of. About the way you hide your real self from others. What one new thing would you like to do or say to someone today?

Telephones

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in human beings' responsibility before God and yet the failure to meet those demands fully. One demand is to be 'authentic.' Christians use the term 'sin' to mean 'missing the mark' – like an arrow missing the target, people can be less than fully alive and fail to meet their potential. It also seeks to foster a concern for the needs of other people.

When I was a kid, we didn't have a 'phone. We either had to go up the road to a 'phone box or beg the people next door to use theirs. You had to be somebody quite important to have your own 'phone, like a doctor.

Now, virtually everyone has a mobile and you can spend more time chatting on the mobile than with people in real life, face to face.

'Phones can be a nuisance. You are in the middle of something important and it rings. Most people feel they must answer it straight away.

People can have strange ideas about 'phones. In the 1920s, some people were scared to ring their doctor. They thought they might catch germs from the other patients who had used the line.

Some people like 'phone pranks like the ones Bart Simpson does. You ring someone up and then say, 'Can I speak to Mr. G. Raff, please?' Or 'Mr. C. Lyon.'

Or you say you are a 'phone engineer. You are just checking that the line is working OK. 'Can you whistle down the 'phone loudly, please?'

When 'phones weren't as good as they are now, you sometimes got crossed lines and other people's conversations butted in – like the one where someone was calling America from England and a man's voice said, 'I pulled the chain and down she went.'

Phones are a good thing. They save lives – police, ambulance, fire brigade.

They cheer up an old person living on their own a hundred miles away.

But remember, it's supposed to be two way – listen to the other person instead of talking yourself all the time.

A French priest wrote this prayer about 'phones:

I have just hung up; why did he telephone?
I don't know. . . Oh! I get it..
I talked a lot and listened very little.
Forgive me, Lord, it was a monologue and not a dialogue.
I explained my idea and did not get his;
Since I didn't listen, I learned nothing,
Since I didn't listen, I didn't help,
Since I didn't listen, we didn't communicate.
Forgive me, Lord, for we were connected, and now we are cut off.

Prayers of Life – Michel Quoist (Gill & Macmillan 1963)

The Eighth Day

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in an underlying purpose to creation and human responsibility for it. It also reflects Muslim belief that human beings are Allah's kaliphs, responsible for looking after the world.

The Jewish creation myth says that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day

Someone brought out a record that said that the world could be destroyed in one day on the eighth day

In Britain, forty per cent of our income tax is spent on defence. The United States of America accounts for forty three per cent of world arms spending.

A thirteen year old boy wrote:

"Why did you create men, God?
All we do is argue between ourselves.
We use our brains to make bombs to destroy our world
Instead of using them to do some good in the world.
Why did you create beautiful animals, O God?
All that men do is kill them.
Why did you give man the power of thought?
All we do is think of hatred."

A fourteen year old wrote:

"The Lord, who created the earth
created all living animals,
created the universe we hope to explore,
and created mankind,
to spend millions of pounds on hydrogen bombs,
the money spent on which could have been used to feed the needy,
to cut off the whole continent by an iron curtain,
to dump milk which could feed starving babies,
to start two world wars in the space of sixty years
to make marvelous steps forward in science,
to build new schools to pass on the learning of others."

Think of the thousands of people who die every day of hunger.

For what the world spends in twelve hours, on bombs, we would wipe out the disease of malaria all over the world.

The cost of a modern tank, one million dollars, would buy one thousand classrooms or improve storage facilities for 100,000 tons of rice. One person can live on just over a pound of rice a day.

We in the rich countries consume a hundred times as much energy as people in the poorest countries. One American uses as much oil as one thousand people in Nepal

70 per cent of the world's population has no access to medical care at all. The cost of a jet fighter could pay for the setting up of 40,000 village chemists

Take some time to think what the future will be like? And what you would like it to be like?

Keshar is a nine year old in India who says: "Life will be better when I'm older. I will work on a building site and earn money. I would like to live in a house and have two sets of clothes."

Fifteen—year--old Mohammed of India says: "I sleep anywhere sheltered. Under a bridge or a bus stand. In the monsoons I sleep on a landing. When I'm older I'm going into business. I'll sell fruit and vegetables. I'll be a good businessman because I've learnt to look after myself."

Fourteen year old Vinton in Jamaica says: "In twenty years' time I wish I'm in a nice job, with my wife, children and house."

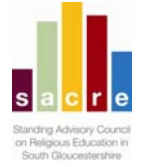
Kariwki, 15 years old in Kenya says: "When we are adults, the United Nations will be even stronger. Then it will order all countries to get rid of weapons which can extinguish life on earth."

It's nice to have something to look forward to. Fifteen year old Bjorn of Sweden has other ideas: "The endless rows of trees will be gone and there will be barbed wire instead. I just think it will stop then."

Poem by Peter Porter:

What will happen in the future?
Will the eighth day come?
Or will human beings wake up and do something to save the world?
Will the rich help the poor?
What do you think?
What can you do about it?

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The Hubble telescope

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in creation and in seeking to foster a sense of wonder and awe at the beauty, mystery and power of the universe

Play Louis Armstrong's 'What a wonderful world' while showing slides from The Hubble telescope

The Tablecloth

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings

Beautiful story.... makes you understand that things happen for a reason.

The brand new pastor and his wife, newly assigned to their first ministry, to reopen a church in suburban Brooklyn, arrived in early October excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve. They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc, and on December 18 were ahead of schedule and just about finished.

On December 19 a terrible tempest - a driving rainstorm hit the area and lasted for two days. On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, headed home. On the way he noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity so he stopped in. One of the items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory coloured, crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colours and a Cross embroidered right in the centre. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus 45 minutes later. She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, etc., to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area.

Then he noticed the woman walking down the centre aisle. Her face was like a sheet. "Pastor," she asked, "where did you get that tablecloth?" The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG were crocheted into it there. They were. These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before, in Austria. The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just got the tablecloth. The woman explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria. When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. He was captured, sent to prison and never saw her husband or her home again.

The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth; but she made the pastor keep it for the church. The pastor insisted on driving her home, that was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great. At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted



everyone at the door and many said that they would return. One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighbourhood continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving. The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike. He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again all the 35 years in between.

The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier. He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door and he saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine.

Trainers

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings

What brand of trainers do you possess?

What brand of trainers do you wish for?

Why are they so expensive?

For every £50 you pay towards a pair of trainers, the factories that made them get £10 – in Thailand and Indonesia.

See if your trainers have a label saying where they were made.

Some brands of trainers have responded to protests and make sure the workers get a fair wage. But there are many brands that don't.

In a typical factory, 40 workers sew 23,000 stitches and share £1 for doing so.

Eni is 22 and lives in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. She earns 16p an hour.

Meanwhile, the bosses of some trainer firms earn £1 million a year.

Famous footballers get paid £1 ½ million a year to wear a brand of trainers as a form of advertising.

Laura, in the Philippines, asked for more pay. She was sacked. She can't get another job as she now has the reputation of being a troublemaker. With no wage coming in and no unemployment benefit her children are starving.

So take some time to reflect: are trainers cool..... or cruel?

Unfair World

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in human beings' responsibility before God and yet the failure to meet those demands fully.

Get 30 volunteers to stand at the front.

Imagine that these thirty people represent the world.

Get two to stand apart from the other 28

Only two of will live to the age of 74.

Get a different two to stand apart from the other 28

Two of you will be so underfed that you won't grow properly.

Get 17 to stand apart from the others

Seventeen of you will earn less than £300 a year.

Get 15 to stand apart from the others

Only fifteen of you will be able to get clean drinking water.

Get 1 to stand apart from the others

One of you will control 80% of the farmland.

Get 6 to stand apart from the others

Only six of you will live in safe homes.

Yet there is enough food for the entire world's population.

80% of all the world's children are vaccinated against major diseases

But still

One fifth of the world goes hungry

2.5 million unvaccinated children die each year from measles, tetanus, and whooping cough

100 million children (mostly girls) do not attend school

More than 2 million people die each year from effects of polluted water

Spend a moment reflecting on why the world is so unfair and what you can do to make it a better place.

War toys

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief about human beings' responsibility before God and yet the failure to meet those demands fully. It allows reflection on the fundamental questions of life, and focus attention away from the concerns of the moment to those things which are of eternal concern to human beings.

I wonder how many of you played with toy guns when you were younger. Particularly the boys.

Millions of children around the world are suffering and dying from lack of food or the most rudimentary health care.

Meanwhile, millions more in the richer parts of the world will be receiving gifts whose cost and technological sophistication half the world's population cannot even dream about.

Many of these gifts embody violent and anti-human values. They will be bought in huge quantities and massively promoted.

The connection between wars, violence and militarism and the toys children play with, while obvious to some, appears unlikely to most. The dramatic drop in sales of 'violent' and 'war'-like toys after the Hungerford massacre in 1987 and other similar massacres shows widespread public unease - a general feeling that some connection exists; it also shows adults' ability to restrict the purchase of these toys and by their response the toy industry's nervousness about the effects of greater public consciousness and awareness.

The toy industry argues that just because people believe something it does not make it true. This cuts both ways. Were somebody to market a 'rapist's kit' - a novelty toy for children to explore relationships, it's unlikely that this would turn us into a nation of rapists. But it would be withdrawn after protest.

Why do we find toys and games about hurting, maiming and killing appropriate gifts?

Take some time to reflect whether toy guns do any harm. If you think they do, think what you could do to change things. You could leaflet in the run up to Christmas. You could collect signatures for the petition calling for a voluntary ban on the advertising of war toys. You could contact your MP, MEP, Councillors etc to find out their views. You could contact Play Groups and Primary Schools. You could write letters to local press, contact local radio and raise the issue of war and violent toys on the air. You could explain your view to friends, colleagues and relatives and discourage the purchase of war and violent toys.

What do you live for?

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Guess whom I'm talking about!

His mother lavished love upon him. His father was a strict and unapproachable Customs officer, who often whipped his son. The boy particularly loved to play "Cowboys and Indians". He was brought up as a devout Roman Catholic and for a time he wanted to be a priest. He was an above average pianist, and wrote several plays.

His father died when he was thirteen. His mother died of cancer when he was eighteen. In the last weeks of her life her son did most of the nursing, and drew a picture of her on her death-bed.

He wanted to become an art student but he was turned down.

He often went hungry. For a couple of years he was virtually destitute, living in doss houses, and making what money he could by selling postcard views of city scenes he had sketched and painted.

In 1910 an aunt withdrew her savings from the bank, and gave her twenty-one year old nephew a good deal of it. He got good lodgings, and began to work solidly in watercolours and oils, and sold everything he completed to dealers.

He joined up in World War One and was soon thrown into the battle of Ypres. He won high military decorations for bravery. He was gassed and temporarily blinded. When the war ended, he was thirty.

Four women attempted suicide for love of him; three successfully. He was always good with the children.

Have you guessed who it is?

Adolf Hitler.

He could be a charming man but his purpose in life was to make Germany great and put down any obstacles in the way.

A magazine interviewed 25 year old businessmen and women. These were their values:

Success, money, getting to the top of their business. They believe they are among the most promising and able young people of any generation. They

believe they will have far more influence on our global future than any governments

Our world is competitive. They recognize that there are more 25-year-olds alive right now than there ever have been before. So it's urgent to get what they want. So they cannot afford relationships that place any "drag" on their progress. Marriage is possible if it does not hamper career. Children must wait until both members of the marriage have claimed well-paid posts. Even leisure activities can be defended only if they contribute to career enhancement. They have to change jobs frequently. Their major obstacle is the people at the top now. They see them as lacking imagination and incompetent. They have to prove themselves better than them and make it to the top by the time they are thirty-five.

I wonder if they will regret not having children.

What do you live for?

Do you put yourself first? Or other people?

Will you leave the world a better place? Or a worse place?

White Poppies

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief about human beings' responsibility before God and yet the failure to meet those demands fully;. It allows reflection on the fundamental questions of life, and focuses attention away from the concerns of the moment to those things which are of eternal concern to human beings.

This is controversial and will annoy some of you.

You see some people wearing white poppies at this time of year instead of the traditional red ones.

The red poppy was invented at the end of World War One to commemorate the British dead. Not the enemy dead nor the civilian dead.

After every war people say 'Never again.' Soldiers who survived told others how terrible it was.

For some time, the government tried to stop the real truth being known. All letters from the Front were censored. By July 1916 people had to write on standard forms and cross out things that didn't apply. There was no space for any bad news.

Prime Minister Lloyd George said that if the truth were known, people wouldn't come forward to fight. "But of course they don't know and can't know. Censorship wouldn't pass the truth."

Recruitment posters said, 'Your country needs you!' People were brainwashed into seeing the enemy as evil. It was your duty to die for others.

The reality was that British teenagers were herded into the firing line. They sang about the pointlessness of it all: 'We're here because we're here because we're here.'

Remembrance Day was invented to dress it all up. Governments tend to fall after a war so they held a ceremony to make voters proud. Heroic battles like Passchendaele, the Somme, Verdun and Waterloo were recounted, yet these were really massacres.

We are right to remember the war dead. But we should also remember the 120+ wars since World War 2. Of the 20 million killed, two-thirds were civilians. Children were gassed or blown into unrecognisable fragments. Millions were crippled, made homeless, mourning the loss of parents and relatives.

Our country is always building up to another war. We spend about £30 billion a year. One minute's arms spending could support 2,000 children for a year.

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If we scrapped Trident we could build 500 hospitals, 9,000 schools.

We have enough nuclear weapons to blow up the world twenty times over.

The white poppy makes this point. The people who make them promote international exchanges to further understanding between different peoples.

Every war we fight leads to another war. We have to stop this vicious cycle.

So, instead of looking back to past wars and dressing people up in medals we need to work for a better future.

Jesus said some outrageous things like, 'Love your enemy.' 'If your enemy strikes you on the left cheek, offer him the other one.'

Mad? Fighting back is even more mad. It could lead to all-out nuclear war and we'll all be dead.

The white poppy idea was started by working class women. In no way did they mean it to be an insult to the war dead. Indeed, they believed in the 'war to end all wars'. These women had lost husbands, brothers, sons.

You can always wear a white poppy AND a red one. Or you can buy a red one and tippex it white – that shows that you have honoured the British dead by giving money to the British Legion.

Take some time to reflect on the heroism of those who fought and died in war. You might like to pray for a time when there will be no more wars.

Would you cope?

This assembly is suitable for the Jewish festival of Succot, which takes place in early autumn, usually in October. It conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in the uniqueness and value of each human being yet our interdependence.

On 9 November 1965, just before sixteen minutes and eleven seconds past five o'clock, a small metal cup inside a black rectangular box began slowly to revolve. As it turned, a spindle set in its centre and carrying a tiny arm also rotated, gradually moving the arm closer and closer to a metal contact. Only a handful of people knew of the exact location of the cup, and none of them knew that it had been triggered. At precisely eleven seconds past the minute the two tiny metal projections made contact, and in doing so set in motion a sequence of events that would lead, within twelve minutes, to chaos.

Over thirty million people would be affected for periods of from three minutes to thirteen hours.

A single backup electric power relay in the Sir Adam Beck power station at Niagara Falls failed.

It was rerouted on to the other four northward lines, seriously overloading them so that they also tripped out.

This immobilised the power network throughout almost the entire north east of America and Canada.

Power to heat and light, to run elevators, to operate pumps that move sewage, water and petrol, to activate electronic machinery no longer worked.

About 800,000 people were trapped in the subways. Of the 150 hospitals affected, only half had auxiliary power available. The 250 flights coming into John F. Kennedy airport had to be diverted; one of them was on its final approach to landing when the lights on the runway went out, and all communication with the control tower ceased.

All street lighting went out in a city of over eight million inhabitants.

One small malfunction can cripple the entire system.

We take things for granted. Just think how much of what surrounds you is understandable, how much of it you could either build yourself or repair should it cease to function. When we start the car, or press the button in an elevator, or buy food in a supermarket, we give no thought to the complex devices and systems that make the car move, or the elevator rise, or the food appear on the shelves. We have become increasingly dependent on the products of technology.

There is enough food only because we use fertilizers. The working day is structured by the demands of the mass-production system. Roads are built to take peak hour traffic and remain half empty outside those hours. We can neither feed, nor clothe, nor keep ourselves warm without technology.

Step across the road into the path of an oncoming vehicle and your life may depend on the accuracy with which the brakes were fitted by someone you do not know and will never meet. A frost in Brazil may change your coffee-drinking habits by making the price prohibitive. A change of policy in a country you have never visited and with which you have no personal connections may radically alter your life – as was the case when the oil producing states raised the price of oil in 1973 and thus set off rampant inflation throughout the Western world.

Although international airlines crisscross the sky carrying more than a million passengers every day, only a tiny fraction of the world's population has ever flown.

Most of our experience of the world comes from watching from television rather than living in the real world.

We ignore the vulnerability of our position and seek security in the routines imposed by the technological systems which structure our lives into periods of work and rest.

In New York people presumed that the fault would be rectified, and that technology would come to the rescue. The reaction of most of the New Yorkers trapped in subways, elevators, or unlit apartment blocks was to reach out to the people immediately around them – not to organise their own escape from the trap, but to share what little warmth or food they had so as to pass the time until danger was over.

Suppose the power failure was permanent, for example after a nuclear explosion. Suppose you decide to leave the city. Supposing you have the means of transport, is there any fuel available? Do you possess the equipment necessary for survival on the journey?

Do you know which direction to go? Few people have more than a hazy notion of which are the best places to grow crops. Do you possess things other refugees might need? If so, can you protect yourself if they try to steal them from you?

How will you protect yourself and your family from the wind and rain? If shelter is to be a farmstead – has it been abandoned? If it has not, will the occupier be persuaded to make room for newcomers, or leave? Will you use force, and if necessary, kill?

Plants will grow sufficiently regularly only if they are sown in ploughed ground. Without this talent you will be lost. Unless you have a store of preserved food you and your family will not survive the winter.

Jews are currently keeping the festival of Succot. The name means 'tents'. For part of the time they live in tents instead of taking for granted their houses with all their comforts and gadgets. It is a reminder that we take things for granted, that nothing lasts, not even life itself.

Take a little time to reflect:

What things do you take for granted?

Could you cope without them?

Are you thankful for them?

You are awesome

This conforms to South Gloucestershire SACRE's policy by reflecting the Christian belief in creation and in seeking to foster a sense of wonder and awe at the beauty, mystery and power of the universe

Your brain is more complex than the most powerful computer.

When you read, light falls on 14 million colour sensors and 200 million black and white sensors sending countless electrical impulses along an optic nerve to the brain.

Your heart beats around a hundred thousand times a day

Your lungs inhale over two million litres of air every year. They are big enough to cover half a tennis court

You produce 100 billion red blood cells every day.

Your skin is constantly regenerating.

You have around 60 thousand miles of blood vessels.

A doctor wrote about how delicate the human body works. "The thyroid is a small organ in the front of the neck. It produces a hormone. Too much of the hormone and your eyes stick out, you sweat heavily and you rapidly lose weight. Too little of the hormone and your body slows down. I once had a patient who stopped moving altogether. The incredible thing is that the difference between having too little and too much is very, very small. The normal amount is equal to one grain of sand in all the blood in the body. The equivalent of two grains would be far too much."

The Psalms is a collection of songs in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. One, Psalm 137, says, 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made.'

Take some time to consider how awesome you are.

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