

AN ACT OF WORSHIP FOR PUPILS IN YEARS 7 AND 8 FOR EDUCATION SUNDAY

Note:

This act of collective worship has been written for a school with a Christian religious character and the language reflects this. It may be used in any kind of school, but the leader will need to consider the needs of the students and may choose to adapt the language if it is not appropriate to assume a shared faith. An alternative is suggested below (words in italics), but the leader may choose to use their own words.

It is important that students do not feel they have to join in the prayer if they do not feel it is appropriate for them to do so. The leader may use a form of words, such as “I am going to say a prayer and I invite you to be still and listen. If you would like to pray with me, please join in saying Amen at the end.”.

Resources:

- this resource sheet
- PowerPoint
- post-it notes (2 each) and pens
- candle (optional)

Expected time: 10-15 minutes

SLIDE 1

Begin your time of worship by reminding your pupils that this is a special time when we are going to put all other things aside and invite God to come and be with us. God is always with us, whether we are aware of his presence or not, but over the next ten minutes or so we are going to remember him being with us as we also reflect on the past year and look forward to the months ahead. If you have a candle, you could light it now as a visual reminder of God's presence with you all.

SLIDE 2

Use the pictures to tell the story of 2020 so far... what can your pupils remember? Invite reflection using the following questions:

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- Are any of the pictures positive?
- If you could travel back one year, which of these might you have guessed and which are totally unexpected?
- Will any of these events have changed the world forever?
- Have you learned anything new or made any other changes in your life in 2020? Perhaps you learned a new skill?

The pictures represent: 1) Bushfires in Australia 2) Storms and floods in the UK 3) the Coronavirus 4) lockdown and empty streets 5) support for the NHS and other key workers – messages of thanks and hope 6) lockdown was good for wildlife (and goats in this town in Wales) 7) PPE – gloves, masks etc . 7+8) Black Lives Matter protests following the death of George Floyd 9) the toppling of statues commemorating people involved in the slave trade 10) the appearance of Comet Neowise 11) hurricanes hit the USA 12) bomb in Beirut, Lebanon.

SLIDE 3

The history of God's people is a history of a people learning to live through change. Two example stories pupils may be familiar with are the story of Noah's ark and the story of Abraham.

- Noah and his family faced a climatic disaster. Because they were faithful in listening to and obeying God, even though people laughed at them and thought they were crazy, they survived to live in a world washed clean from all the evil that had been there before. They were able to start again in a clean, new world. They would have had to be brave and obedient but also resilient and imaginative. and trusting.
- Abraham was asked by God to leave his home and his family and to set off on a long journey to a distant land. God promised to bless him with many descendants and to bless the whole world through him but Abraham didn't see this promise even begin to be fulfilled for decades... he had to be extremely patient. Abraham obeyed God and learned to live a new life in a new land where he would trust entirely on God to protect and look after him and his wife and household... and God kept his promise.

There are many more stories in the Bible of God's people living through difficult and changing times and being given fresh starts. Can the pupils think of any? Possible answers include Joseph being kidnapped and taken to Egypt, Moses and the Hebrews in the wilderness and eventually reaching the promised land, Jesus' disciples following his death and resurrection...but there are many more!

(Students from faith backgrounds may have stories from their own scriptures about God revealing truths to God's people through the struggles they endure.)

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Through these experiences successive generations of God's people have learnt that they can trust him and they have discovered new and more caring ways to live together in society.

SLIDE 4

Now ask the pupils to look back at their own experience of 2020 so far. What have been the most difficult challenge for them personally? eg Illness/death of loved ones, missing friends and school, unable to say goodbye, financial worries at home, boredom and loneliness... Have there been any unexpected blessings? Anything they would like to hang on to? e.g. spending more time as a family, away from possible difficulties at school, learning new skills at home, quieter roads so able to go out on bike rides, enjoying nature more...

Like God's people before us, we have lived through a challenging time, and we know that the challenges aren't all over yet. Like them, we have an opportunity: we can either go back to exactly the way the world was before, or we can learn to become a kinder society, a more thoughtful people, to value the beauty of creation more and to get less stressed about the things which we have discovered don't matter so much.

Invite your pupils to write on their post-its:

- one thing during 2020 they have found challenging or difficult
- one thing they have liked and want us to remember or hang on to as we journey forwards from this point, a changed people in a new world.

SLIDE 5

Prayer.

