

Gather Family Collective Worship / Service



The aim

The aim is to develop a new worshipping community at a time which suits modern day living, showing the whole family that the teachings of God are relevant to everyday life. That learning about God and his son Jesus can be fun, and engaging and give us the strength to face each day and to try to live it as God would want us to. The same Collective worship themes as the school uses will be used to underpin the worship. 'Gather' will also use an inter-generational style of worship and wording that the children will be familiar with from collective worship in school.

The worship will build on the strong links between school and church, offering an opportunity for families to come to worship at a time when parents are already away from home, collecting their child/ren from school and is therefore possibly a more convenient time to worship God.

The background

Many adults do not attend church worship for many reasons, due to timing or busyness; children experience collective worship in school.

In church schools, pupils are involved in organising and leading worship which follows a particular pattern with regular elements such as songs, lighting of candles, Bible stories and time for reflection and prayer. These elements are well embedded and understood, often linked to the school's Christian vision and values that underpin its overall ethos. 'Gather' is for all families.

The idea

Working with churches that already have a strong relationship with their local school. The school invites families to the local church for the 'Gather' services.

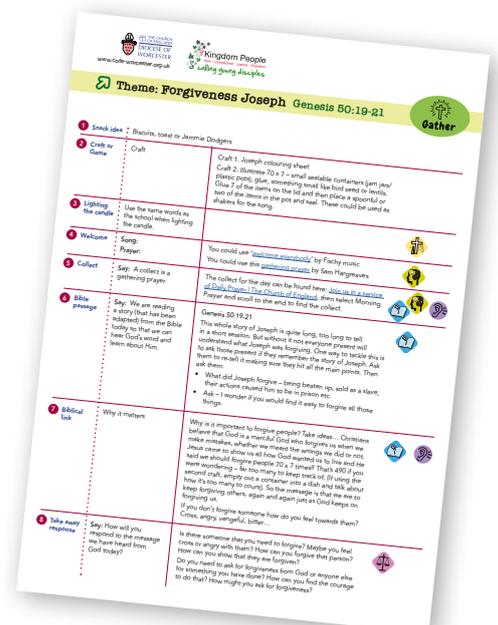
'Gather' can be led by clergy or laity and will take a maximum of 40 minutes, including participation from the children. Each element of the service (bible reading, prayer, song, lighting candle, blessing etc.) would be prefaced with a short explanation of why we do this as part of worship so that parents unfamiliar with the format feel welcomed, comfortable and involved.

Format

Set up the church to suit your context, ensuring the space looks welcoming. Encourage participation of those who attend, you could have laminated task cards (e.g. light the candle, blow out the candle, carry the Bible, swing the incense, read the Bible passage, or say a prayer – this could be their own or pre-written). As people arrive ask if they would like to help with the service today and let them choose the task they would like to do.

'Gather' resource sheets to aid your planning can be found online.

They have been written based on the Christian values and Fruits of the Spirit, as used by primary schools. You may wish to use your own materials.



 We suggest a structure for the service as follows:

- 1 **Snack** Have a snack available, whichever snacks you choose be aware of allergies. If you decorated biscuits or cakes as the craft activity, then these could be the snack for that session.
- 2 **Craft or Game** Have an activity available that links into the session theme, for the families to engage with as they arrive.
- 3 **Lighting the candle** When you are ready to start move everyone to the worship space and light the candles to denote the start of the worship. We recommend you light the same number of candles as used at school and also use the school's wording for this.
- 4 **Welcome** Welcome song and/or prayer. Repetition is helpful for younger children and we, therefore, recommend using a small selection of songs or opening prayers to begin these services. We recommend '[welcome everybody](#)' by Fischy music as a welcome song, (you will need to purchase this song to enable you to use it) and this [gathering prayer](#) by Sam Hargreaves
- 5 **Collect** If you wished to use the daily collect you could so do at this point in the service or with the prayers at stage 9. When saying the collect **explain** to those present what it is e.g. "a collect is a gathering prayer" The contemporary version of the collect can be found here: [Join us in a service of Daily Prayer | The Church of England](#), then select Morning or evening Prayer and scroll to the end to find the collect.
- 6 **Bible passage** Sharing the Word. **Explain** we are reading a story (that has been adapted) from the Bible so that we can hear God's word and learn about Him. It is important that we share the Bible in an engaging way. Some ideas:
 - Godly Play
 - Use Lego to re-tell the story
 - A Drama or sketch
 - Short animations
 - PowerPoints
 - An assembly style story
- 7 **Biblical link** Share with the families, ideas of what this passage might mean for us today.
- 8 **Take away response** **Say** how will you respond to the message we have heard from God today? Give them ideas on how to change their thinking or actions to align with God's teachings.
- 9 **Prayer** Prayers could be interactive encouraging a response or a physical action to encourage engagement. Children could write their own prayers to say, or you could task someone to find out things that the congregation would like to pray for and then formulate them into a prayer.
- 10 **Song** Use contemporary worship songs, or songs with repetition to allow people to join in easily. You could print the words onto a service sheet or project them onto a screen or TV.
- 11 **The Lord's Prayer** You may wish to include The Lord's prayer, you could use the same version as the school, or ask people to pray using whichever version they know.
- 12 **Blessing** You may wish to close with a blessing, using your own or the one suggested in the resource sheet.

 When planning this worship service, you may wish to consider both learning styles and spiritual styles to help everyone who has gathered to meet with God. We have highlighted on the resource sheets the sections that tie in with the different learning and spiritual styles.

Symbols for Spiritual Styles		Symbols for Learning Styles	
 Word the path of the intellect	 Symbol the journey of mystery	 Visual	 Kinaesthetic
 Emotions the way of the emotions	 Action The road to justice	 Auditory	 Read/Write



You can read more about Spiritual Styles at rootsontheweb.com or [Going 4 Growth \(www.going4growth.com/growth_in_faith_and_worship/spirituality/spiritual-styles\)](http://www.going4growth.com/growth_in_faith_and_worship/spirituality/spiritual-styles)