

Child led Liturgy in Primary School



Guidelines for Staff

Introduction

Children have a valuable role to play in liturgy right from the time that they first begin to know what it means to pray and respond to God and God's creation.

This role, however, differs from the beginning of primary school to the end. What follows is a benchmark of expectation for the average child as he or she journeys through primary school. As in all areas in school life, some children will be in advance of their year group where some will still be functioning at an earlier stage.

A lot of the guidance supports the journey through the levels of attainment for RE.

All children in school also have a role to play in teacher led liturgy, which ranges from small scale worship in the class room to whole school liturgy which includes parents and parishioners. This document, however, is concerned with what they do to lead and direct the prayer themselves.

Each year builds on the previous year so expectations are not repeated each year. Instead it is assumed that what they can do in one year e.g. in setting up the focus in Year 2 will also be an expectation in the following year unless otherwise stated.

All classes will need to have a box of resources from which the children will choose when setting up the focus for prayer time. What goes in these boxes will vary from year to year to enable progression for the children. Suggestions for the contents are specified in the appendix at the end.

Where it is suggested that year groups lead whole liturgies or prayer time, the expectation would be that these occur no more than once a half term because of the necessary planning and preparation time. Also all of the expectations for the year group would not need to be present in every liturgy. The expectations should, however, be covered during the year.

Notes on each year group are also in the appendix

Foundation Stage and Key Stage One

During Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, all leadership, however small, will lay the foundations for leading on a larger scale in Key Stage 2.

The expectation for these younger children is that all of the following will relate to their own class and class prayer time.



Foundation Stage

Children are just beginning their journey through primary school and have limited understanding and knowledge of their faith at this point in their school life. They can, however, begin to take a very simple part in their own class prayer time which will lay the foundations for leadership as they progress through school.

Expectations at this stage would be that

- Children begin to name the elements of the liturgical focus which is present in their classroom.
- Children can choose people and things they want to pray for at appropriate times in the liturgy or class prayer time.
- As the year progresses, children can begin to place items on the liturgical focus under the direction of an adult. These could include things they have brought in themselves, items from a story sack relevant to the Gospel.

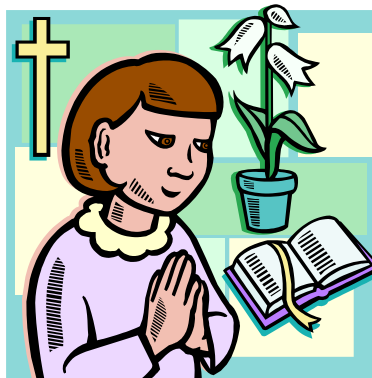


Year 1

Children are now becoming more religiously literate and will be able to take a slightly more active part in the choices that are made in prayer time, thus laying further foundations for leadership as they progress.

Expectations

- Children recognise and can name the elements of the liturgical focus e.g. crucifix, candle, Bible
- Children will be able to say why these are appropriate for inclusion (possibly also suggesting what is not appropriate)
- Children should be able to finish a prayer, given the first part e.g. Thank you, God, for ...
- Children should be able to help set up the focus for prayer using given elements and direction e.g. "Please place the crucifix and Bible..."
- Children should be able to bring suitable elements to add to the focus at specific times of the year under the guidance of the teacher. (This will help them to begin to appreciate the liturgical year so, e.g. they could bring flowers at Easter to represent new life)

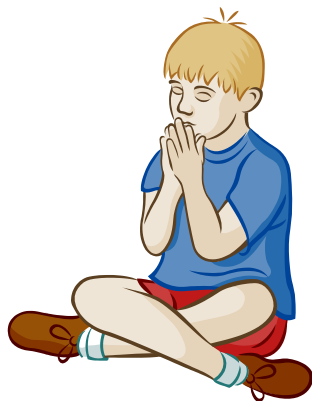


Year 2

As they approach the end of a key stage, the children will be developing a deeper understanding of their faith and what is and is not appropriate during prayer time. They will be familiar with leadership roles in the classroom such as monitor duties and will easily transfer these to prayer time and liturgy. A box of items to use for the prayer focus will now need to be available for the children. These should just include the elements relevant to that month's/season's liturgical theme so that they do not have to choose between too many things.

Expectations

- Children will be able to set up the focus for class prayer, choosing items from a given set of resources, and be able to explain why they have chosen each item.
- Children will be able to write their own simple prayers for inclusion in the liturgy. These will be written to a formula and will encompass prayers of intercession, praise, thanks and regret.
- Occasionally children may lead by reading a simple text or by choosing an appropriate hymn with guidance.



Lower Key Stage Two

The children, through their involvement in class prayer time in the lower key stages, will now have some experience of the things that leaders of liturgy need to do. During years three and four, the children will build on this and, by the end of year 4, should be able to plan and lead a liturgy or prayer time for their own class.



Year 3

As children enter the junior phase of their primary years, they will be increasing in confidence and experience, having been part of many liturgies and different forms of prayer in Key Stage One. Many of them will be preparing to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

Expectations

In addition to what is expected at the end of Key Stage One

- Children will be able to write and read their own prayers in different liturgies with much reduced guidance from the teacher.
- Children will be able to read the readings during different liturgies.

The teacher will still choose the readings and be responsible for the breaking of the Word.



Year 4

By the end of Year 4 children should be much more confident in their understanding of what constitutes prayer time and simple liturgy. By this stage in their school life they need to be laying the foundations for leading whole school liturgy which is the expectation by the end of Key Stage Two. For this reason they should, by the end of Year 4, be able to plan and lead a simple prayer time or liturgy for their own class. Teacher support is essential but the main elements of the liturgy will be organised and led by the children

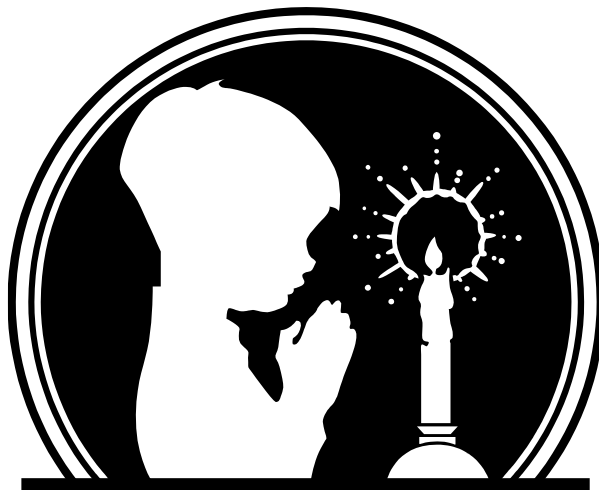
Expectations

- Children should be able to lead their own class liturgy with appropriate support from the teacher - e.g. the teacher may need to provide links within the liturgy.
- Children should be able to set up an appropriate focus from a termly resource box
- Children should be able to choose appropriate hymns from a selection
- Children should be able to choose appropriate readings to suit a given theme with some guidance.
- Children should begin to develop skills in the breaking of the Word e.g. through drama, art, explanation or dance.



Upper Key Stage Two

As children approach the end of their primary school life, they will be well equipped to start planning and leading liturgy on a wider scale. They should be able to choose all of the elements that are appropriate to different liturgies and put them together to create worship for children other than their classmates.

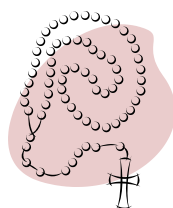


Year 5

In Year 5 children should build on the experience of planning and leading liturgy and prayer time for their own class and begin to create liturgy suitable for a Key Stage. Teacher support will still be an element in this as guidance will be needed to ensure that all of the elements are appropriate to the theme and the audience but, if the children have had the experience of developing their leadership skills throughout the school, then Key Stage liturgy is the next step.

Expectations

- Children should be able to plan and lead a liturgy appropriate to a Key Stage with guidance where necessary.
- Children should be able to select from a range of resources which relate to the whole liturgical year to set up an appropriate focus for a particular theme. Some guidance should be offered.
- Children should be able to select elements that promote a spiritual atmosphere e.g. music at the beginning and end of a liturgy.
- Children should be able to choose a theme and appropriate readings with guidance where needed.
- Children should be able to choose hymns appropriate to the theme from a wider selection.
- Children should begin to explore creative elements within liturgy e.g. thoughts for going forth, planting seeds to represent new life, pouring water to signify forgiveness and cleansing etc.
- Children should continue to develop skills in the breaking of the Word using a wider range of ideas e.g. reflection, poetry, dance, drama, art.



Year 6

By the time they are in Year 6 children should be able to plan and lead a whole school prayer time or liturgy. This will involve choosing all of the appropriate elements and organising the liturgy from beginning to end and so, an expectation is that they understand the components of liturgy. They may wish to ask for adult support or for an adult to play a part in the liturgy at some point, however. This would be part of their planning.

Expectations

- Children should understand and be able to include the main components of liturgy - the Gathering, the Word, the breaking of the Word, Prayer and Going Forth.
- Children should be able to choose a theme appropriate to the liturgical year
- Children should be able to select and set up an appropriate focus from a yearly box of resources.
- Children should be able use correct liturgical vocabulary where necessary
- Children should be able to choose appropriate readings suited to their theme
- Children should be able to choose appropriate hymns suited to their theme
- Children should be able to include traditional prayers as well as their own prayers.
- Children should be able to use a variety of prayer types such as meditation, liturgical dance and music.
- Children should be able to select and use different creative elements within their liturgy e.g. stones during Lent, flowers or seeds at Easter.
- Children should be more confident in their ability to break the Word so that it is relevant to their audience.



Appendix 1

Resource box for setting up focus

All boxes should include the following basic items

- Crucifix
- Candle
- Drapes
- Bible
- Prayer book

These can then be added to with items suited to the liturgical year/time of year such as

September - nature elements to represent harvest

October - statue of Mary or rosary to remember Our Lady

November - book of remembrance

December - Advent promises or Advent promise card (Today we promise to... children decide each day what they wish to do.) The Advent Wreath will be a permanent feature throughout December

January - something to represent parish links or links to Cafod or global awareness. Alternatively you could choose something to represent gift to link with the Epiphany

February and March - Lenten elements such as stones, crosses, water, twigs or seeds.

April - Items to celebrate Easter - flowers, plants, Easter gardens

May - statue of Mary or rosary to remember Our Lady

June - elements suited to Pentecost such as flames, the gifts of the Spirit on cards, images of doves.

July - Items reflective of the school year or elements to represent success or achievement during the year.

Individual schools may have themed weeks during the academic year and these could also be incorporated into the boxes.

Key Stage One boxes - Monthly themed boxes

In Key Stage One the elements that are in addition to the basic elements should only be added when it is the month in question so that the children are beginning to learn which items are meaningful at different times of the year.

Lower Key Stage Two - Termly themed boxes

By this time the boxes should be prepared for a term at a time so that children are beginning to select items relevant to that month or season

Upper Key Stage Two - Yearly themed boxes.

By now the boxes should contain items suitable for the whole year so that children are able to demonstrate that they can select items relevant to any time in the church's year.

Appendix 2: Guidance for liturgy

The following guidance offers suggestions as to how a liturgy could be prepared and organised by children.

There would be greater teacher support provided for lower key stage 2 liturgy than for upper. Children can plan using a proforma and then use them as a script when leading their liturgy.

Lower Key Stage Two

Guidance

At the top of the first sheet include the theme of the liturgy and the audience e.g. *Liturgy for Harvest Festival in Year 4*

Gathering - this could include an introduction, an opening prayer and/or a hymn

The Word of God - this would be chosen by the teacher and referenced here with a note about who is to read it.

Breaking of the Word - this could include participation by the children e.g. prepared drama, dance or art but will have been directed and planned by the teacher. It may just be the teacher talking to the children.

Symbolic action - This can be optional but could include placing of stones, lighting of candles, pouring of water, planting of seeds etc.

Prayers or Intercessions - prayers should be written or named here and a note about who is to read them.

Going Forth - This could include a thought for the day or an action to be done that day

Upper Key Stage Two

Guidance

At the top of the page the children should write who the liturgy is for e.g. Key Stage 1, the whole school etc. They then include the theme and their own names and year group.

Atmosphere created by: If they are going to play music or use some other method to create an atmosphere then they should mention this here.

Gathering: This could have a combination of a written introduction, hymn or prayer. It could involve response from the children. They may wish to be more adventurous and use drama or dance here.

The Word of God: This can be from any part of the Bible and should reflect the theme. They should specify which readings and who is to read it. They may want more than one e.g. they may want to include a psalm.

Breaking of the Word: This will have been devised by themselves and needs to reflect on the Word in some way, relating it to their daily life. It could be done in a creative form - song, dance, drama, art.

Symbolic action: This is optional but if used should relate to the breaking of the Word. It could include placing of stones, lighting of candles, pouring of water, planting of seeds etc.

Prayers and/or Intercessions: These can be traditional or written by the children. They can involve response by the participants.

Going Forth - This could include a thought for the day or an action to be done that day.