

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP FOR SCHOOLS: MAKE ROOM FOR THE MANGER

This is intended for schools that will be using Love Life Live Advent, either through a single copy of the book in each classroom or through distributing copies to each child.

Preparation beforehand:

- Go through the Powerpoint and decide which slides you want to use, and ensure you have the technology to use it – whether or not you use the Powerpoint, you will need to prepare the actions and props mentioned in the commentary below.
- In conjunction with the school, select a location in the hall where collective worship takes place that can be cleared so as to create a ‘special place’ (see daily action for 1st December) – but don’t actually clear it yet, as this will be done during the act of collective worship. Establish whether each class is also going to create their own special place.
- Ask the school if the children know any songs that encourage them to focus on God and be still.
- If your school already has a focal point for worship, it may need to be extended to accommodate extra items during Advent, or it may have got ‘cluttered’ with other things and need a bit of a tidy – work out in advance what will work best in your own situation based on the script below.
- If you are giving out copies of Love Life Live Advent either to individuals or to classes, have them ready.

You can also find these notes in the Powerpoint (>View>Notes Page)

1	<p>Begin the act of collective worship in your usual way.</p> <p>Ask if anyone knows what season in the church year is about to begin? If they say Christmas, suggest that Christmas is so important that we need a little time to get ready for it – hopefully someone will remember that the getting ready period is called Advent.</p>
2	<p>Put the picture on the screen, and hold up a copy of the LLLA booklet. If your school has used LLLL before, you can tell them that LLLA is just like it – a simple thing to do or think about every day to help get ready for Christmas.</p> <p>Point out the strapline, “Make room for the manger” – when Christmas comes, we want to have room for what’s most important – it’s easy for things to get so cluttered and busy and frantic that we don’t have space in our minds for what really matters.</p> <p>What if there wasn’t time to sing any carols? What if you were too busy to sit down and eat together on Christmas day? What if there was so much clutter everywhere that there’s no space to put your nativity set? Remember, Jesus was only born in a stable because the inn was so busy there wasn’t room for him! What if there was so much going on that you forgot what Christmas is about?</p>
3	<p>Say that it can be hard to make room for what matters. Sometimes it means getting rid of some of the stuff that doesn’t matter, or rearranging things to give pride of place to the most important things.</p> <p>The first daily action is a chance to make a special place where you can put all the things that you will</p>

	<p>think about during Advent.</p> <p>Suggest that you can make a special place at home [and in your classrooms here at school] but for now we're going to make a special place here in the hall, that we can all share.</p> <p>Point out the location that will be used as the focal point. If it's already a focal point, remind them it's there and why we have it, and explain that we're going to make it even more special for Advent. If it's not yet a focal point, wonder aloud with the children what we'd need to do to make it special.</p>
4	<p>First clear the space – remove anything that's not needed or that needs to be thrown away – get the children and teachers to help you decide which things need tidying up and putting somewhere else, and which need recycling and which need to be put in the bin.</p> <p>As you do this, you can wonder aloud about what this process might be like in their classroom – what sort of things might need tidying away – or what it would be like if they did this at home. What sorts of things tend to clutter everything up?</p>
5	<p>Now you can start making your space special. It's up to you how you dress it – there are some ideas below that you may wish to adapt.</p> <p>You can simply use the items as visual aids as you add them or you could add photographs of similar items to this slide and project it as you work.</p> <p>Wonder aloud about each item, and feel free to ask for suggestions (if they suggest things you don't have, you could see if they'd like to bring the item in, or suggest they use that in their own classroom's special space).</p> <p>Admire together your newly created special space. Wonder aloud about what we might add to it during the next few weeks as we think more about Advent and Christmas. Perhaps invite the children to send you suggestions of items that might be added, based on the daily actions.</p> <p>Remind them that they will also be able to contribute to their classroom special space.</p>
6	<p>Remind everyone that to create a special space we had to de-clutter first.</p> <p>De-cluttering isn't just for our homes or our school, though.</p> <p>Wonder aloud about things that clutter our minds up – and what sorts of mind-clutter we might want to tidy up or get rid of in order to make room for really important thoughts about Advent and Christmas. Maybe all the thoughts we have are OK, but some of them are taking up too much room and not leaving enough room to think about Jesus coming at Christmas.</p> <p>Ask the children to close their eyes, or if they prefer, look at the candle on the screen (or the real candle in the newly created special space). Give them time to focus just on one thing, and let all the mind-clutter fade away.</p> <p>Close with a prayer: Lord Jesus, there was no room for you at the inn, Help us to make room for you in our hearts and minds, and may this special place be a blessing to us on our Advent journey. Amen.</p> <p>Song Suggestion: Be Still for the Presence of the Lord</p>

CREATING A SPECIAL PLACE AT SCHOOL

Special places can be set up in the main hall where the school meets for worship, and also in individual classrooms. Some schools may also wish to have some sort of seasonal focus in the entrance area. No special place can accommodate all these items – think beforehand about what feels most important, or talk to the children about what they would like to see in their special place.



Purple cloth – this can be draped over a table or unit if your focal point is freestanding, or attached to the wall if your focal point is static against a wall or in a corner. You may need to explain or remind everyone that purple is the colour used in church during Advent, and that it will change to gold and white on Christmas day.



Advent Candles – some schools will already have a four-candle or five-candle wreath which could be used. If not, you may wish to set up some small candles in your special place. Even a tea light in a holder is a powerful visual symbol – and tea lights are less likely to get knocked over than taller candles.



Alternatively you may wish to get hold of an advent calendar candle – one with the days of advent marked on the side, so that you can burn one day's worth of wax each time the school meets for Collective worship (NB someone will need to do this on Saturday and Sundays, too – it could be a special honour to be asked to take the school candle home and light it at the weekend). It might be appropriate to ask if they school would like their candle(s) to go to the local church once school breaks up – then the children will recognise them when they come for Christmas services.

Never leave lit candles unattended, and always keep matches out of the reach of children. Some schools may prefer you to use battery-powered candles.



Wreath – there are suggestions for making your own wreath in the online resources for 1st December's daily action – the recycling wreath, in particular, would make a good class project. If you want to go into the symbolism of wreaths in Advent, then the two key elements would be the circle (representing God – no beginning or end) and evergreens (everlasting life); this may not be necessary, though, as the wreath is a common enough sight during Advent.



Jesse Tree – some schools and churches will have used a Jesse tree during Advent before, or may even have a tree that they use every year. A Jesse tree is a way of bringing together the story of salvation – from the patriarchs and prophets, to John the Baptist then the Holy Family.



Crib scene / nativity set – the school may well already have one, or the parish may already operate a 'travelling nativity set' (*posada*) which can spend some time in school. Individual classes may even make their own. There is a template for a simple nativity set made from a single piece of paper or thin card available for download from www.liveadvent.net

You could add items for to the daily actions, especially if you are using LLLA as your collective worship theme, eg 2nd December – a jar into which people can put any spare change, 6th December – pine cone (NB this is a Saturday in 2014, so not a school day), 9th December – the words to a favourite carol, etc.