

**'In conversation with Helen Matter': Purpose, Structure, Variety in class-based worship**

**Top Tips and Take-Aways**

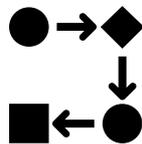
Helen's top tips and wisdom	Questions to reflect on as a school
<p>'Collective worship is the beating heart of school life, which brings pupils and adults together and pumps life into the school'.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a shared understanding of the purposes and value of collective worship across adults and pupils?</li> <li>• To what extent is it seen as the 'beating heart which pumps life' into the school?</li> <li>• What might your next-steps be here?</li> </ul>
<p>GERS is a useful model for structuring collective worship: gather, engage, respond and send.</p> <p>(For more information on the GERS structure, see pp.13-15 of the Diocese of Canterbury guidance: <a href="https://tinyurl.com/yy8fxzsu">https://tinyurl.com/yy8fxzsu</a>.)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Might a structure such as GERS be useful in your school collective worship – both class-based and larger groups? In which ways?</li> <li>• Might such a structure be useful for pupils and adults as they plan, facilitate, participate in class-based worship? In which ways?</li> <li>• Which aspects of GERS do you think might be strongest in your setting? Which ones might be a fruitful area to develop further?</li> </ul>
<p>'When thinking about class-based worship, consider how it fits into the overall/weekly whole school plan'.</p> <p>'We have a tendency to view the weekly plan in terms of group sizes – Monday whole school, Tuesday class-based, Wednesday Key Stage etc. I think it's quite helpful to think instead about <i>what kind/flavour of CW</i> we would like each worship to represent: Monday could be <i>proclamation</i> which announces the Good News of Jesus or the biblical story/value; Tuesday could entail further <i>reflection</i> on this story or value in class; Wednesday could focus on <i>prayer or intercession</i> for others; Thursday <i>praise</i>, often as a singing assembly, with Friday drawing the week together in <i>celebration</i>'.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does CW have a certain 'flavour' in your school each day? Might each day having a certain 'flavour' be useful?</li> <li>• Do you think adopting a similar structure to the one Helen discusses would be useful in your context?</li> <li>• Would knowing how each class-based worship fits into the 'bigger picture' be useful for teachers/pupils in facilitating and engaging within class-based worship?</li> </ul>

Once you know the flavour of the class-based worship you are facilitating, you can allow for variety through using the structure of GERS. Perhaps each half-term you might vary the way in which the class gathers, engages, responds and sends. For example:

For 'gather': listening to music, ringing a bell, a prayer, lighting a candle, using some liturgy etc.

For 'respond': vary the opportunity for prayer and reflection - singing prayers? Signing? Reading? Writing? Drawing?

*'Look for small varieties within the bigger structure'.*



- How might Helen's thoughts be useful in thinking about variety and class-based worship in your school?
- How might including variety in collective worship contribute to meeting their spiritual needs of all?
- How might pupils be involved in decision making and facilitating here?

'The best time to start settling into class-based worship with a new class is in July. When you meet your new class, why not introduce them to your class-based worship practice? Perhaps have a box/basket which includes various items which will be used as a focus for worship and introduce them. Why not have a catalogue – pupils can choose items to be ordered (such as hand-held candles) ready to use in September'.



- Do you think starting this might be purposeful in your own context?
- What impact might giving pupils increased ownership in class-based worship have?
- Are there other ways pupils might be given more ownership in class-based worship?

'Another practical thing is to decide when during the day (if it's possible for you to decide) you'd like your class-based worship'.



- When would be best for class-based worship to take place? Why? As a *quiet start* or *team talk* at the start of the day? An *oasis of stillness* in the middle? Perhaps at the end of the day as *drawing together* or *reflecting back* on the day that has passed?
- What might be the benefits and drawbacks of each?

The time we allocate for collective worship in school soon adds up. Fifteen minutes per day, over thirty-nine weeks mean that pupils in a primary school will experience 340 hours of worship over seven years. 'It's really worth crafting collective worship carefully and making special...making it something we can really be proud of'.



- Are you proud of collective worship in your school?
- How do you know the impact it is having?
- What might your next-steps might be in making it even better? Perhaps over the next five days, five weeks, five months, five terms, five years?

To explore some of these aspects further, please find other collective worship guidance and resources created by Helen Matter: <https://www.cofesuffolk.org/schools/school-leaders/collective-worship/collective-worship-resources/>.

If you'd like to discuss aspects of collective worship further, please contact Ryan Parker (RE and Christian Ethos Adviser) – [rparker@stalbans.anglican.org](mailto:rparker@stalbans.anglican.org).