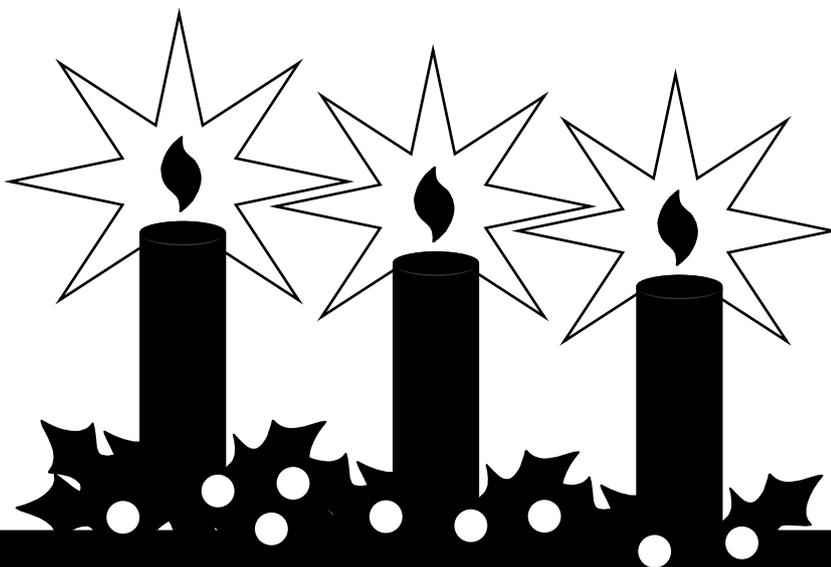




Diocese of Chichester Schools Department

CANDLES, STARS & SURPRISES

Collective Worship Resources
for Advent and Epiphany



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Many schools in the diocese enjoyed using the worship outlines we published last year for Holy Week and Easter (they are still available in the schools' section of the diocesan website: www.diochi.org.uk). This year we have commissioned Adam Earle, the headteacher of West Hoathly CEP School, to produce some more material for use in Advent and Epiphany – the periods leading up to Christmas and following on from it. Every school that I have ever known celebrates Christmas itself with imagination and with enthusiasm. Tea Towel Productions flourish as they always have done! And there is a wealth of Christmas related material available for schools to use from a wide variety of sources.

But Advent and Epiphany are less well resourced and less often celebrated effectively. This is a loss as they have at their heart concepts that are vital for understanding and experiencing the Christian faith. They help us understand who Jesus is and why he came to earth. They enable children to experience again the sense of waiting expectantly for his arrival. They lead us to marvel afresh at the surprise element of his birth in poverty and simplicity in a way that leads us beyond the commercialism of much that passes for Christmas in today's world.

To help schools in this the Diocesan Board of Education has commissioned a set of 9 outlines for collective worship, written by Adam Earle, one of the headteachers in the diocese. He has an established track record not just in writing and leading outstanding acts of worship himself, but also in producing materials that other schools can use to enrich their worship. His outlines are flexible, practical and (where appropriate) fun; they make use of a wide range of music (both for listening and for singing); they provide good 'hooks' to grasp the attention of children; and they make good use of some of the huge range of liturgical resources now available in the Church of England (under the *Common Worship* banner) in a way that will create better links between what children experience in school and in their parish churches. We are again very grateful to Adam for sharing his expertise more widely. In addition this time he has produced six PowerPoint presentations to assist in some of the outlines to enhance the visual element of the celebrations, and some more advanced material (on the Jesse Tree) for schools that have greater ambitions!

I hope many schools will make use of this material. Adapt it to suit your own situation (especially in secondary schools). Involve clergy and other Christian visitors to schools in its delivery. Share some of the ideas and material with those who lead worship in the churches your school has links with. Evaluate the impact it has on everyone in the school community: pupils, staff, parents and so on. And please feed back your experiences to the Schools Department at Diocesan Church House (on 01273 425687 or schools@diochi.org.uk); we would welcome any comments you have to make in the light of your experience of using the outlines. The comments we received from schools about the Easter materials were very helpful to us in planning this second set, and we are already thinking of what we should do next!

Jeremy Taylor

Diocesan Director of Education

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

The rhythm of the Christian Year presents us with the ideal pattern for shaping our acts of Collective Worship in school. Whilst Christmas and to some extent Easter come naturally to us, some of the other seasons need a little more teasing out to realize their value fully.

Advent

Advent, of course, marks the beginning of the Christian Year and is a period of preparation and "solemnity" which points towards Christmas (in a similar manner to Lent leading towards the joy of Easter) and the celebration of the incarnation of Christ. It is also, traditionally, a time to reflect on the "Second Coming of Jesus" spoken of in the New Testament and is, as such, a time of hope and anticipation which looks beyond Christmas and Easter to things yet to come. The theology which surrounds this idea is, however, more complex and even contentious so, whilst we touch on this theme we focus mainly on the themes of preparation, anticipation and readiness.

At the 2008 Diocesan Headteachers' Conference our keynote speaker Revd Peter Moger spoke of the value of using liturgical forms and worship patterns to enhance our school worship. He also highlighted a series of publications entitled, "Together for a Season." The Advent, Christmas and Epiphany edition is a valuable source of ideas. It outlines three routes to follow the journey of the season, The Advent Wreath, The Crib or The Jesse Tree. To help us reflect on Advent I have unpacked the Advent Wreath in a school friendly manner, forming the basis of four acts of worship, extend the theme of Advent to provide two further outlines and then provide some outline resources and ideas to pursue the Jesse Tree route if you prefer.

Epiphany

The season of Epiphany, which follows Christmas, is often lumped together with Christmas as the Three Kings (or Wise Men) parade in as part of our annual nativity play. It recalls the visit of the Magi and the revelation to the wider world (represented by the wise men) of Christ. The star guides them to their destination, they encounter the child and they present their symbolic gifts. These acts of worship are intended for use at the beginning of the Spring Term.

As with the Easter worship outlines I have tried to achieve the following:

- To include familiar elements and follow a familiar pattern.
- To use inclusive language where appropriate.
- To include elements of Christian liturgy and traditional practice which may be used depending on your normal practice and parish tradition but may also be omitted or enhanced.
- To provide guidance for music which covers a range of different styles and uses familiar publications where possible.
- To include Bible readings either as a main focus or for further reflection.
- To use different styles of prayers, including some responsorial ones.

As always it would be valuable to check with the local incumbent to see if there are any specific practices, liturgy or traditions which might be readily added or included as alternatives in planning and using these acts of worship.

All the acts of worship require some time to be spent in preparation both in terms of resources and ensuring you know exactly what is coming so they run smoothly and the participants can benefit from them fully. All the music for listening suggestions is available from "itunes" and can be downloaded relatively cheaply if not already available to you.

It is inevitable that these resources reflect my particular style and many are drawn from ideas which I have used successfully in the past. Please take them and make them your own, they are intended as guidance and, provided the core message is not lost, can be used flexibly. You may also decide not to use them all, but just some of them.

I hope these outlines prove valuable to you.

Adam J. Earle
Headteacher – West Hoathly CE Primary School

1 - The First Candle

Theme: Candle 1: Hope - Things can only get better

Resources: An Advent Wreath - there are many websites which explain how these are made - see also the Advent Wreath PowerPoint
Matches, lighter & snuffer
Photos of some older members of your family e.g. parents, grandparents and beyond
A simple family tree
Optional (but valuable): Advent Wreath PowerPoint, projector, laptop & screen

The liturgical colour for Advent is purple, you may wish to use a cloth of this colour to cover the worship table

Music for Listening: O come, O come Emmanuel (Aled Jones - The Christmas Album)

Suggested Song(s): Be still for the presence of the Lord
This little light of mine

Opening:

- Children enter quietly with appropriate music playing.
 - Greet the children.
 - Use the following opening sentences:

V: This is the day that the Lord has made
R: **Let us rejoice and be glad in it**

V: May the light of Jesus Christ our Lord be with you
R: **And also with you**
-

Engagement:

- Ask the children how the music made them feel, what it made them think? The music we listened to reminds us that it is a very special time of the year, an exciting and busy time but also a time to stop and think. Ask what that time is called - Advent.
- Advent is the time which leads up to Christmas and we are going to be doing something special to help us count down the time until Christmas. Show the Advent Wreath.
- This is our Advent Wreath - wreaths like this have been used for many years to help people mark off the time before Christmas.
- It is said that the original wreath was invented by a German man, Johann Hinrich Wichern in 1839. He was the founder of a home for poor children in Hamburg, Germany and during the weeks leading up to Christmas was constantly being asked by the children if it was Christmas yet.
- He made a wooden circle out of a cart wheel and topped it with nineteen small red candles and four tall white candles. Each day he would light an additional candle, saving the white candles for Sundays. (If using the Power Point presentation there is an image to show how this may have looked). How is our wreath different from the original? It only has the candles to mark the Sundays in Advent.

Development:

- On each Sunday in Advent an additional candle is lit until finally, on Christmas Day a candle (usually white) may be added to the centre to represent Jesus the Light of The World.
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- Each candle has a special meaning, reminding us of different parts of God's plan for the world and often, when the candle is lit a special prayer is said. We will light our first candle in a moment, when we have thought about its meaning.
 - The first candle is the candle of **Hope** - what is hope?
 - It also reminds us of the people who were important right at the beginning of God's plan, known as the Patriarchs. People like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses - you probably know some of their stories.
 - Our ancestors are very important, without them of course we wouldn't be here today.
 - Show the family tree and talk about how we all have ancestors, parents, grandparents, great grandparents. We won't be able to remember them all but we will all have some of their features and characteristics.
 - If possible show some images of your ancestors and perhaps talk about some of the positive things that they were known for or which you inherited e.g. good looks, beautiful singing voice etc.
 - The Patriarchs, the ancestors of all God's people were the first to begin to understand God and the first to believe that God had a plan which would one day mean the world would be transformed and all illness, and bad things would be gone.
 - They had hope that God would change the world for good. By sending Jesus, the one who we are all waiting for as we look towards Christmas, God gave hope to the world.

Bible Reading:

- Listen to these words from the book of Psalms - what is it that gives the writer hope?
- Psalm 42.5-6a
- The writer invites us to put our hope in God.

Reflection & Prayer:

- Light the first candle on the Advent Wreath.
- The light of the candle of hope reminds us that, no matter what things today might bring, God has promised that there is a bright future for all his people.
- Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors;
to you be praise and glory for ever.
You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith
and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment.
May we be obedient to your call
and be ready and watchful to receive Christ,
a lamp to our feet and a light to our path;
for you are our light and our salvation.

Blessed be God for ever. Amen.

- A child may read the following:

Father God, when the world seems unfair,
life is tough and things aren't going well,
remind us that you bring hope.
Help us to trust and follow where you lead us.

Amen.

Conclusion:

V: Christ has brought us out of darkness

R: **to live in his marvelous light**

V: Let us share the light of Christ

R: **Amen**

2 – The Second Candle

Theme: Candle 2: Love - What the future holds

Resources: An Advent Wreath
Matches, lighter & snuffer
A sealed envelope containing a piece of paper which reads: **“The team which scores the most goals!”**
Optional (but valuable): Advent Wreath PowerPoint, projector, laptop & screen

The liturgical colour for Advent is purple, you may wish to use a cloth of this colour to cover the worship table

Music for Listening: O come, O come Emmanuel (Aled Jones - The Christmas Album)

Suggested Song(s): Love will never come to an end
Lord the light of your love (Shine Jesus Shine)

Opening:

- Children enter quietly with appropriate music playing.
- Greet the children as usual and ask them to sit silently as the first Advent candle is lit again and this time light the second candle as well.
- Use the following opening sentences:

V: This is the day that the Lord has made

R: **Let us rejoice and be glad in it**

V: May the light of Jesus Christ our Lord be with you

R: **And also with you**

Engagement:

- I know something amazing, some incredible information has come my way. With this information I could change my life for ever. Hundreds, thousands or maybe millions of people would love to know what I know.
- Would you like to know what I know? Would you like me to tell you?
- Reveal the envelope! Make a big thing of how special it is.
- In this is some amazing news - I know which team is going to win the next football World Cup final! Yes! It's amazing isn't it.
- I could make a fortune with this sort of information - what's it worth? (You might like to stage a mini auction at this point - who will offer you the most?)
- Well this information is worth more than any of us could afford, but because I care about you all and I want you share to this valuable moment I am prepared to let you in on the secret. Would you like that?
- After plenty of build up, drum rolls if necessary, open the envelope and read: “The winning team for the next football World Cup final will be ... the one that scores the most goals!”

Development:

- Okay, so that wasn't the most incredible or exciting news you've ever heard, you might even have been able to work that out for yourselves.
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- The thing I want you to think about today was the fact that I shared the information because I cared.
 - God is a bit like that - he knows absolutely everything there is to know, he knows what the future holds and most importantly he knows how his plans for the world will work out.
 - God loved his people so much that he wanted them to know about him, he wanted to share some of the good news about the future.
 - Today we have lit our second candle - the candle of love which also reminds us of the prophets, God's special messengers, who God sent to tell his people about his plans for the future.
-

Bible Reading:

- One of the greatest prophets was named Isaiah. God used Isaiah to share some amazing news about what would happen in the future and how God's plan would work.
 - Isaiah 9.2, 6 & 7
 - You may have heard those words before. They describe Jesus, although they were written many years before he was born.
-

Reflection & Prayer:

- The light of the candle of love reminds us that God loved his people so much that he shared the good news of the future with them and finally sent his son to set the world free.
- Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true;
to you be praise and glory for ever.
Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets,
but in our days you speak through your Son,
whom you have appointed the heir of all things.
Grant us, your people, to walk in his light,
that we may be found ready and watching
when he comes again in glory and judgement;
for you are our light and our salvation.

Blessed be God for ever. Amen.

- A child may read the following:

Father God, when the world seems unfriendly
and no-one seems to care,
remind us that you bring love.

Help us to love others just as you love us.

Amen.

Conclusion:

- **A Prayer for Blessing**

May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us. **Amen.**

3 – The Third Candle

Theme: Candle 3: Joy - Party Time!

Resources: An Advent Wreath
Matches, lighter & snuffer
Balloons, party poppers, streamers, party blowers, etc
An envelope containing a "letter"
Optional (but valuable): Advent Wreath PowerPoint, projector, laptop & screen

The liturgical colour for Advent is purple, you may wish to use a cloth of this colour to cover the worship table

Music for Listening: Gaudate (or some other joyful music)

Suggested Song(s): You shall go out with joy
Jubilate, everybody.

Opening:

- Children enter quietly with appropriate music playing.
- Greet the children as usual and ask them to sit silently as you light three Advent candles on the wreath.
- Use the following opening sentences:

V: This is the day that the Lord has made

R: **Let us rejoice and be glad in it**

V: May the light of Jesus Christ our Lord be with you

R: **And also with you**

Engagement:

- Begin with much leaping around, enthusiasm, balloon throwing, party poppers, streamers and party blowers as if engaged in a real celebration. Wave the envelope around as if you are utterly thrilled having received some fantastic news – explain that you are very excited and celebrating because you have just found out something brilliant.
- Ask the children what they think it might be. Encourage them to try and guess what your good news is, perhaps a lottery win, fame etc.
- Taking a moment or two to calm down, explain that you will share your good news. Remove the "letter" from the envelope and read out the following (or similar): Dear Mrs (or Mr) X, I am writing to inform you that your application to become a member of our society, the International Brussel Sprout and Marmite Fan Club, has been successful.
- Isn't that fantastic? Okay so perhaps it's not all that exciting but good news can be a cause for celebration.
- Today we have lit three of our Advent Candles. The third candle is the candle of joy – it marks the third Sunday in Advent known as Gaudate Sunday or "Rejoice!" Sunday.

Development:

- Jesus had a cousin, he was born before Jesus and was the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah. His name was John the Baptist. He played a very important part in preparing people to meet with Jesus, just before Jesus began his work.
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- John was an odd sort of fellow and not exactly the type of person you would expect to be sharing the good news that Jesus was on his way. He lived in the desert and ate the things he could find around him like wild honey and locusts (an insect rather like an extra large grasshopper).
 - John had a very important role to play, he told people that Jesus, the Saviour that the people of Israel had been waiting for, was coming and that they should prepare by thinking about their lives and choosing to do what was good and right.
 - John told people about God's love and forgiveness and he baptized them in the river. This meant he dipped them down under the water as a symbol of ending an old way of life and starting afresh.
 - This was wonderful news, the news that the people were longing to hear. No wonder that as we light the third Advent Candle we think about John and about Joy.
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Bible Reading:

- Listen to what this passage from the Gospel of John (a different John by the way) and hear what John the Baptist had to say about Jesus.
 - John 1.29-31
 - Great news for everyone!
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Reflection & Prayer:

- The light of the candle of joy reminds us of the good news that John the Baptist shared with God's people telling them that Jesus was coming to set them free.
- Let us pray.

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true;
to you be praise and glory for ever.
Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth
as a burning and shining light.
May we your servants rejoice in this light,
and so be led to witness to him
who is the Lord of our coming kingdom,
Jesus the Saviour and King of the ages.

Blessed be God for ever. Amen.

- A child may read the following:

Father God,
when the world is full of sadness and gloom
remind us that you bring joy.
Help us to be filled with joy and rejoice in every moment of every day.
Amen.

Conclusion (May be said together or by the leader):

- **The Grace**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all, evermore. **Amen.**

4 – The Fourth Candle

Theme: Candle 4: Peace – Calm down dear!

Resources: An Advent Wreath
Matches, lighter & snuffer
A long strip of paper as a “to do” list
A large pile of papers (such as may be found in the average headteacher’s in-tray!)
A telephone
An assisting adult with a cup of tea
Optional (but valuable): Advent Wreath PowerPoint, projector, laptop & screen

The liturgical colour for Advent is purple, you may wish to use a cloth of this colour to cover the worship table

Music for Listening: Quiet reflective music eg Enya

Suggested Song(s): Peace, Perfect Peace
Be still for the presence of the Lord

Opening:

- Children enter quietly with appropriate music.
- Greet the children as usual and ask them to sit silently as you light four Advent candles.
- Use the following opening sentences:

V: This is the day that the Lord has made

R: **Let us rejoice and be glad in it**

V: May the light of Jesus Christ our Lord be with you

R: **And also with you**

Engagement:

- After a calm beginning suddenly realize that you haven’t really got time to hang around doing “assembly” as you have so many things to get done. Sit down at a table with the paper work and start to plough your way through it, then remember you have to phone your Auntie Sue, halfway through the conversation with her suddenly hang up and realize that you have left something you need outside the assembly space, dash out, come back, now check the things on your “To do list” and let the list unroll.
 - You should end up in an absolute tizzy, unsure exactly what to do next or indeed what you have to do anyway.
 - Assisting adult enters, with very soothing tones and asks what the problem is.
 - With much gasping, explain all the things you have to do and get really worked up again.
 - Assisting adult stops you abruptly. They explain that what you need is a bit of peace.
 - They sit you down, maybe put on some soothing music and then hand you a cup of tea.
 - You gradually calm down and begin to realize what a fool you have been getting so worked up.
 - Assisting adult leaves saying that a bit of peace makes all the difference.
 - Today we have lit all four candles on our Advent Wreath, the fourth candle is the Candle of Peace. Ask what is peace? It is an end to conflict, it is quiet, it is calm and it is stillness inside.
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Development

- Read the following poem, written by an eight year old boy who normally found it very difficult to be still, calm and peaceful. It was about the only good piece of writing he managed to complete in a whole school year:

Peace is when nobody is talking.

Peace is quietness.

Peace is when you are sitting down

And nobody is there.

Peace is when a war has finished.

Peace is when you've had an argument

And you're sitting down trying to

Think of something to say next.

Peace is like quiet dancing.

I think peace is like home.

- As well as peace the fourth candle reminds us of Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was someone who discovered peace at a very special moment in her life.

Bible Reading:

- Listen to that very important part of the Bible when Mary finds out that God has chosen her to be the mother of Jesus.
- Luke 1.26-38

Questions & Further Development:

- How do you think Mary felt when she first saw the angel?

She would have been alarmed and fearful, not really understanding what was happening.

- After she heard the message the Angel brought her and accepted what God wanted her to do she changed. What did she say in the end?

"May it be to me as you have said."

- Something must have changed the way she felt. She was at peace.

Reflection & Prayer:

- The light of the candle of peace reminds us of the peace which Mary felt as she bowed and obeyed God. Her son, Jesus, came to bring peace to the world.
- Let us pray.

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle;
to you be praise and glory for ever.

Your light has shone in our darkened world
through the child-bearing of blessed Mary;
grant that all who have seen your glory
may daily be renewed in your image
and prepared like her for the coming of your Son
who is the Lord and Saviour of all

Blessed be God for ever. Amen.

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- A child may read the following:

Father God, when the world is full of fear and conflict
remind us that you bring peace.
Help us to be a people of peace,
calm and gentle as we care for one another.
Amen.

Conclusion:

- Before leading the final prayer you may like to give the children the opportunity to share **The Peace** as is customary in the majority of Anglican Churches. In other words to greet each other and ask that God's peace may be upon those they greet. The following words may be used to introduce this:

V: God will speak peace to his people,
to those who turn to him in their hearts.

R: The peace of the Lord be always with you
And also with you

V: Let us offer one another a sign of peace

The children may then be encouraged to shake hands with those around them and, while doing so, say the words **Peace be with you.**

- **A Prayer for Blessing**

May the Lord bless us and watch over us, may the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us,
may the Lord look kindly on us and give us his peace. **Amen.**

5 – Ready & Waiting

Theme: Being prepared for the coming of Jesus

Resources: An Advent Wreath – light the appropriate number of candles
A large (and new looking) flashlight/torch with no batteries inside
Optional (but valuable): "Bridesmaids" PowerPoint

The liturgical colour for Advent is purple, you may wish to use a cloth of this colour to cover the worship table

Music for Listening: O come, O come Emmanuel (Aled Jones - The Christmas Album) or an another reflective carol eg It came upon the midnight clear, Silent Night

Suggested Song(s): Colours of day
Give me oil in my lamp

Opening:

- Children enter quietly with appropriate music playing
- Greet the children. Light the candles on the wreath if you are using this or light a single candle.
- Use the following opening sentences:

V: This is the day that the Lord has made

R: **Let us rejoice and be glad in it**

V: May the light of Jesus Christ our Lord be with you

R: **And also with you**

Engagement:

- Explain to the children that you have got an early Christmas present. Something that you are very excited about and simply can't wait to try.
- Show the children the torch and go on to explain what a wonderful torch it is, how powerful the beam is and all the many uses you can put it to.
- Prepare the children for the big moment when you will switch the torch on, they may need to shield their eyes from the dazzling light etc. Build up the tension and then very deliberately "switch on" the torch.
- Of course the torch won't light and you can appear surprised, slightly embarrassed. Check the batteries and realise there are none.
- Apologise for not being properly prepared.

Development:

- Advent is a time when people think about getting ready for Christmas, there is a great deal to do and we can all get very worried in case we have not got everything done in time for the big day. Imagine what it would be like if we woke up on Christmas morning and there were no presents, no Christmas tree, lights or decorations, no delicious food for the feast... We would probably be a bit disappointed and we certainly would not be prepared.
 - For Christians all over the world, Advent is not just about being prepared for Christmas. When Jesus left his disciples (before sending his Holy Spirit) he promised that one day he would return and transform the world for ever.
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- The Bible tells us that none of us know when this will happen but that we should be prepared at all times.
 - Think about this story that Jesus told:

There was to be a spectacular wedding, everyone had been preparing for the special event for a long time and soon the wedding celebrations were to begin. The guests were ready inside, all dressed in their fine clothes. The tables were laid with fine food and the wine was ready to be poured. The bride was dressed in her elegant gown and the bridesmaids were ready, outside the feast, waiting, with their lamps, to greet the bridegroom. There were ten bridesmaids and each one had a lamp, a lamp which burned oil and which would shine out in the darkness. Now five of the bridesmaids were wise and had come prepared with extra oil so their lamps would not run out. The other five were a bit foolish (a bit like me with my torch) and had left their spare oil at home. The ten bridesmaids stood outside and waited. And they waited, then they waited some more. The bridegroom did not arrive so they carried on waiting. They waited so long that their lamps began to burn low and the oil in the lamps began to run out. Just when the lamps were about to go out they heard a shout, "The bridegroom is coming, come and greet him!" On hearing this the five wise bridesmaids trimmed the wicks of their lamps and filled them with oil so they would burn brightly again. The five foolish bridesmaids realized that they had no spare oil and their lamps were not shining. They asked the five wise bridesmaids for some oil but there was not enough so they rushed off to try and find some more. While they were gone the bridegroom arrived, went inside with the five wise bridesmaids and the doors were closed. By the time the five foolish bridesmaids returned they had missed the party altogether."

- If you show the "Bridesmaid" PowerPoint in the background as you tell this story it will (with a little practice) illustrate the running out of the oil!

Bible Reading:

- After telling this story, Jesus went on to tell another, listen to the words he used as they are found in the Bible:
- Matthew 25.34-40
- By serving and caring for others we are serving and caring for Jesus himself. We need to be ready at all times to share God's love and care. We don't know when others will need our help so we need to be prepared, like the wise bridesmaids, at all times to show love to others as in caring for others we are caring for Jesus, bringing the light of Jesus into the world.

Reflection & Prayer:

- Encourage the children to sit, perhaps with eyes closed and think about the ways in which they can show love and care for others and in doing so show love and care for Jesus. Perhaps sharing a smile, a hand on the shoulder to comfort, words to encourage, holding a door open...
- The following prayers are a summary of all the Advent themes; they may also be used as alternative "candle lighting" prayers. They should each be read by different children or adults if possible:

Lord Jesus, light of the world, born in David's city of Bethlehem, born like him to be a king:
be born in our hearts at Christmas, be King of our lives today.

V: Lord in your mercy
R: **hear our prayer**

Lord Jesus, light of the world, the prophets said you would bring peace and save your people in trouble:
give us peace in our hearts at Christmas and show all the world God's love.

V: Lord in your mercy
R: **hear our prayer**

Lord Jesus, light of the world, John told the people to prepare, for you were very near.
As Christmas grows closer day by day,
help us to be ready to welcome you now.

V: Lord in your mercy

R: **hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus, light of the world, blessed is Gabriel, who brought good news;
blessed is Mary, your chosen servant.
Bless your people, preparing for Christmas;
and bless us, your children, who long for your coming.

V: Lord in your mercy

R: **hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus, Light of light, you have come among us.
Help us to live by your light and to shine as lights in your world.
Glory to God in the highest.

Amen.

Conclusion:

V: Christ has brought us out of darkness

R: **to live in his marvelous light**

V: Let us share the light of Christ

R: **Amen**

6 – Doors

Theme: Countdown to Christmas - being ready to receive Jesus

Resources: An Advent Wreath – light the appropriate number of candles
An Advent Calendar (you may have a school one anyway) preferably with chocolate!
The “Doors” PowerPoint or alternative pictures with paper doors to cover
A print of Holman Hunt’s “Light of the World” (included in the PowerPoint)

The liturgical colour for Advent is purple, you may wish to use a cloth of this colour to cover the worship table

Music for Listening: A simple Advent or Christmas Carol

Suggested Song(s): Kum ba yah
From the darkness came light

Opening:

- Children enter quietly with appropriate music playing
- Greet the children. Light the candles on the wreath if you are using this or light a single candle.
- Use the following opening sentences:

V: This is the day that the Lord has made

R: **Let us rejoice and be glad in it**

V: May the light of Jesus Christ our Lord be with you

R: **And also with you**

Engagement:

- Begin by enthusiastically sharing some or all of the following jokes:

Knock! Knock! *Who's there?*
Toodle! *Toodle who?*
Toodle-oo? But I've only just got here!

Knock! Knock! *Who's there?*
Harry! *Harry who?*
Harry up and open this door!

Knock! Knock! *Who's there?*
General Lee! *General Lee who?*
General Lee I don't tell jokes!

Knock! Knock! *Who's there?*
Frasier! *Frasier who?*
I'm a Frasier jokes just aren't that funny!

Knock! Knock! *Who's there?*
Mary! *Mary who?*
Mary Christmas!

- Well perhaps those jokes are a bit corny, the sort of thing you might find in a Christmas Cracker, and perhaps
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it is still too early to be saying "Merry Christmas" but there was a lot of knocking on doors in the days and hours leading up to Christmas day.

- Remember how Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem and spent quite some time knocking on doors trying to find somewhere to stay! They needed to be ready for when Jesus was to be born.

Development:

- Isn't it interesting that one of the ways that many of us like to count down the days which lead up to Christmas involves doors. In fact one of my favourite kind of door is ...
- Show the Advent Calendar (which will probably by now have quite a few doors open). Who has one of these?
- I like opening this type of door, especially if I know that there is something special waiting on the other side: chocolate! (You might like to open the door for the day and maybe eat the chocolate!)
- The problem with this type of door is waiting until the right moment to open it!
- Traditional Advent Calendars don't have chocolate or novelties behind the doors, they have pictures, little symbols of Christmas which help us recall some of the key points of the Christmas story or remind us of the ways we like to prepare and celebrate.
- Advent Calendars can also be a bit of a worry as they can remind us how little time we have to get ready or how long we still have to wait before all the fun begins!
- Let's open a few special doors today and think about some of the special things we are looking forward to and what we are preparing for.
- For the following either use the PowerPoint "Doors" presentation or have prepared the necessary images inside folded card or paper with doors drawn on the outside. In each case ask the children to describe or explain what they remind us of and what we are looking forward to...

- **One - A Christmas Cracker**

Crackers contain surprises (including jokes!); we don't know what we are going to find until we open them. Many of the characters we read about in the Christmas story had surprises at Christmas, Mary was surprised to meet an angel, the Shepherds were surprised to be disturbed by an angelic choir and the Wise Men were surprised to find a new king, not in a palace but in a humble home in a quiet little town.

Have you bought or made any crackers yet?

Two - A Mince Pie

Originally mince pies were oval in shape and the tops were a criss-cross lattice of pastry. The shape represented the manger in which Jesus was laid, the criss-cross pastry was like the straw and the sweet, rich fruity filling was to remind people of the wonderful gift that God gave the world at Christmas - Jesus his Son.

Do you buy or bake mince pies at Christmas?

Three - A Crown

Well of course the three wise men may have worn crowns but this symbol also reminds us that Jesus, that baby born in Bethlehem is no ordinary baby, he is the King of kings, King of all people, all places and all times. He was a very unusual king however. He showed that to be a great leader you have to be prepared to love and serve others.

Perhaps you will be wearing crowns, paper crowns, as you eat your Christmas dinner?

Bible Reading:

- The Bible talks about a door, the door of our heart...
- Revelation 3.20

Reflection & Prayer:

- Display the picture of "The Light of The World" by Holman Hunt.
- Ask the children to look at the image and think quietly - explain that it is a famous painting and shows Jesus, carrying a bright lantern, patiently knocking on a door, the door to someone's heart, just as mentioned in our reading.
- The painting reminds us that Christians believe that Jesus wants to be part of everyone's life but he waits to be invited. As we prepare for all the fun and feasting of Christmas let's take a moment to think who and what it is all about - the coming of Jesus.
- Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, light of the world, bring your light into our lives this Christmas time.

Help us to understand that, behind all the fun and the feasting is the story of your simple, humble birth in Bethlehem.

Help us to share your love and light with others as we prepare to celebrate Christmas again. **Amen.**

- The Lord's prayer may be said.

Conclusion:

V: Christ has brought us out of darkness

R: **to live in his marvelous light**

V: Let us share the light of Christ

R: **Amen**

Extra – The Jesse Tree

The idea of the Jesse tree provides a series of themes, images and stories which provide a very valuable series which can be used through Advent in the approach to Christmas. It focuses on the genealogy of Jesus, or rather the key points in God's plan for the world and forms a sort of "Whistle-stop Tour" of the Bible, focusing on the main characters involved in God's plan, concluding of course with Christ.

The Jesse tree may be produced in various forms, sometimes they may be found as a wood carving, painting or stained glass window. Alternatively a literal tree may be used, the typical white or silver painted twigs found in florist in the weeks before Christmas are ideal. Symbols representing each of the characters are then hung on the branches building an attractive display and reminder. Alternatively a small Christmas tree may be used or a wall mounted display produced.

Here I have provided a list of the characters, in the order they should be covered, suggested themes, readings, music and symbols. The symbols are reproduced as a PowerPoint presentation, available for download. Different children could be asked to draw their own versions on circles of card to be hung on a school Jesse Tree.

Character/Focus	Symbol	Theme	Reading	Songs
Creation	The world	God's generosity	Genesis 1	Fill your hearts with joy Think of a world
The Fall	An apple	Getting things wrong Need for forgiveness	Genesis 3	Give us hope, Lord
Noah & the ark	Rainbow	A fresh start God's promises	Genesis 6-9	Who built the ark God has promised
Abraham	Tent	Looking forward Trusting God	Genesis 12-20	Praise Him, Praise Him One more step
Isaac	Dagger	Testing times Obedience	Genesis 22	Give me oil in my lamp
Jacob	Ladder	Dreams Heaven	Genesis 28	We are climbing
Joseph	Coloured coat	Dreams Good from bad	Genesis 37-45	O Lord all the world
Moses	Burning bush (Call)	Our purpose in life Self value	Exodus 3	Colours of day
	Lamb (Passover)	Freedom Oppression	Exodus 7-12	Lord of all hopefulness
	Tablets of stone (Commandments)	Rules & laws Love for others	Exodus 20	Let there be love shared
Joshua	Ram's horn (Fall of Jericho)	Impossible made possible	Joshua 6	I, the Lord of sea and sky
Gideon	Wheat	Overcoming fear Courage	Judges 6	Be bold, be strong
David	Shield (Star)	Unlikely people Anti-bullying	1 Samuel 17	Goliath was big

Solomon	Temple	Wisdom Right & wrong	1 Kings 1-11	Join with us to sing
Elijah	Stone altar	Miracles True & false	1 Kings 17-18	My God is so big
Isaiah	Trunk & branch	Looking forward God's plan	Isaiah 11	The journey of life
Jonah	Whale	Obedience God's mercy	Jonah	You gotta move
John the Baptist	Scallop shell	New beginnings Preparing the way	Matthew 3	Make way, make way
Mary	White lily	The unexpected Obeying God	Luke 1	The Virgin Mary
Elizabeth	Mother & child	Miracles Nothing impossible	Luke 1	Thank you Lord
Zechariah	Pencil & tablet	Trusting God	Luke 1	Abba, Father, let me be
Joseph	Hammer	A change of heart	Matthew 1	Mary had a Baby
Shepherds	Crook	God honours the poor	Luke 2	Rise up shepherd
Wise Men	Star	Gifts, journey & guidance	Matthew 2	Riding out
Jesus	Child & manger	God's special gift	Matthew 1, Luke 2	As I went riding by

7 – Follow That Star

Theme: Stars - Reflecting the nature and purpose of Jesus

Resources: "Stars" PowerPoint, projector & computer
or printouts and props of the different stars

The liturgical colour for Epiphany is white (or gold), you may wish to use a cloth of this colour to cover the worship table.

Music for Listening: Organ Music eg Wacht Auf (J S Bach)

Suggested Song(s): Riding out across the desert
Follow the star

Opening:

- Children enter quietly with appropriate music playing.
- Greet the children. Light a candle on the worship table if this is your custom.
- Use the following opening sentences:

V: Arise, shine for our light has come,

R: **And the glory of the Lord has risen upon us**

V: May the light of Jesus Christ our Lord be with you

R: **And also with you**

Engagement:

- You may well have thought that, with all the celebrations of Christmas over and done with, that when we came back to school we would no longer have anything much to celebrate. Well you'd be wrong.
- After Christmas comes the season of Epiphany, when we think about the Wise Men, or Magi, who came from distant lands to find Jesus in Bethlehem.
- We often include the Wise Men as part of our nativity plays and Christmas cribs but they may not have actually arrived for quite some time after that first Christmas morning.
- Now, if you go on a journey, how do you know which way to go? A map, ask directions, Sat Nav.
- How did the wise men know which way to go? They followed a star which led them to the place where Jesus was born.

Development:

- Stars are very important symbols. We use them and see them far more than you might think. You might even have been given a star as a reward for doing something well.
 - Let's think about some different types of star and what they show us about Jesus - the child that the Wise Men came to see.
 - Using the Power Point presentation "Stars" (or props / picture), introduce the following stars and ask the children to say what they are before explaining as indicated. Use the Bible passages if you wish, perhaps arranging for a child to read each one. In this case the New International Version has been used.
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Sheriff's Badge: This type of badge would have been worn by a Sheriff. His (or her) job would be to keep law and order - to make sure everyone did what was right. Jesus came to show the world what was good and right, how to love, care and show respect for others.

Bible Passage: John 13.34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

Dressing Room Door Star: If you are the most famous and important person in a film or play you would be known as the "star" and you might have a star like this on your dressing room door. Jesus is the star of God's plan for the world, he takes the leading role.

Bible Passage: Philippians 2.9-10 "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth."

Magic Wand Star: At this time of year we sometimes have an opportunity to see a pantomime. There is often a magical character such as a fairy godmother in these stories and they have a wand with a magical star on the top. Now Jesus doesn't do magic tricks but he can and does do miraculous things and can do things that seem impossible to us.

Bible Passage: John 20.29-30 "Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples..."

Hotel Star Rating: Have you ever stayed in a five star hotel? The more stars the hotel is awarded the better you can expect it to be. Jesus is the best, he has the highest star rating possible. He has promised not to let us down, we can rely on him to be with us at all times.

Bible Passage: Matthew 28.19 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Compass / Guiding Star: The wise men followed the star so they would know which way to go. Sometimes we find it difficult to decide which way to go, what choices to make in our lives. Jesus can be like a guiding star to us and will lead us in the right way.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 58.11 "The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame."

Reflection & Prayer:

- Ask the children to spend a few moments thinking back over the ideas we have presented in today's time of worship.
- Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, our bright shining star, lead us into what is good and right,
help us to listen and learn from you,
transform our world for good even when things seem impossible,
and guide us in the choices we make.

Amen.

Conclusion:

- **A Prayer for Blessing**

May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us. **Amen.**

8 – Party Hats!

Theme: The gifts of the Wise Men and how they symbolize Jesus

Resources: "Hats" Power Point, projector and laptop
or simple home made party type hats - a crown, a bishop's mitre and a top hat.
A wrapped gift (does not need to have anything inside), and perhaps a couple of things that you received as Christmas gifts.

The liturgical colour for Epiphany is white (or gold), you may wish to use a cloth of this colour to cover the worship table.

Music for Listening: Organ Music eg Wacht Auf (Bach)

Suggested Song(s): The best gift
Thank you Lord for this fine day

Opening:

- Children enter quietly with appropriate music playing.
- Greet the children. Light a candle on the worship table if this is your custom.
- Use the following opening sentences:

V: Arise, shine for our light has come,
R: **And the glory of the Lord has risen upon us**

V: May the light of Jesus Christ our Lord be with you
R: **And also with you**

Engagement:

- Presents, presents, presents! Who had a really exciting present for Christmas? Ask for some examples.
 - It's great fun to unwrap presents - share some examples of what you received.
 - It's also great fun choosing gifts, trying to decide what each person might like, based on what we know about them.
 - Now imagine you were choosing a gift for a new born baby - what would it be? (Hold up the wrapped gift). Ask for some examples eg a teddy, toy, rattle, etc.
 - Well there were three gifts mentioned in the Bible's account of the story of Christmas, gifts that were given by the wise men. Can you remember what they were?
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Bible Reading & Development.

- Let's check to see if you were right:
 - Matthew 2.11
 - Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh - but hang on, these aren't exactly suitable for a baby!
 - Gold may be precious but I doubt any baby would be able to lift it as it is very heavy and it wouldn't be much use to them even if they could.
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- Frankincense, well that's incense, something that people may burn to produce sweet smoke as they pray and worship God. Well I suppose that having something that produces a sweet smell might be useful to have around if you have a little baby! But it's not exactly safe to go giving burning incense to a tiny child.
 - And what about Myrrh - that was used to help preserve dead bodies, a sort of disinfectant, I suppose. Now what is a young child going to do with that?
 - Well these gifts are special, they may not be what you or I would choose to give to a baby but the wise men understood that Jesus was going to grow up and one day he would be very different to that tiny child, the gifts were symbols of what he would become.
 - Gold - what sort of person might have a lot of gold? They would be very rich and perhaps powerful. Someone like a king? Jesus is the King of kings - Show the crown on the Power Point or the paper hat. He came to show a new way, the way of love, caring for and serving others.
 - Frankincense - this is used in worshipping God, the sort of person that might use incense is a priest, someone who leads others in their worship. Jesus is the great high priest, praying for us and carrying our requests to the Father; show the bishop's mitre (a brief explanation will be necessary).
 - Myrrh - as we heard, myrrh was used in preparing the bodies of people who have died before they are placed in the tomb. Jesus of course came to die, the myrrh reminds us of this, he died to set the world free from sin. Show the picture of the (undertaker's) black top hat (explain briefly). Of course that wasn't the end of the story, Jesus rose again: that's what we celebrate at Easter.

Reflection & Prayer:

- Think again about the three gifts, reminding us of the gift of Jesus and what he came to do and to be. We may not have anything much to give but what would please God is if we shared love, care and respect for others.
- Let us pray:

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise man, I would do my part.
Yet what can I give him? Give my heart.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the many gifts we enjoy, on special days like Christmas day, and the simple things that we receive each day like food to eat and clothes to wear. We thank you for your special gift, coming to be our king, our priest and for taking away the sins of the world. Help us to love and care for others. Amen.

Conclusion:

- **A Prayer for Blessing**

May Christ our Lord, to whom kings bowed down in worship and offered gifts, reveal to us his glory and pour upon us the riches of his Son. And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all. **Amen.**

9 – Socks!

Theme: The surprise revelation of Jesus to the world - the unexpected nature of his coming.

Resources: This requires some preparation.
Three parcels:

- A "Roses" chocolate box, emptied and wrapped and containing a pair of socks.
- A wine bottle gift bag, also containing a pair of socks.
- A parcel shaped like a pair of socks containing some gold chocolate coins.

The liturgical colour for Epiphany is white (or gold), you may wish to use a cloth of this colour to cover the worship table.

Music for Listening: Carol - Joy to the World

Suggested Song(s): There is singing in the desert, there is laughter in the skies
Go tell it on the mountain (Christmas Version)

Opening:

- Children enter quietly with appropriate music playing.
- Greet the children. Light a candle on the worship table if this is your custom.
- Use the following opening sentences:

V: Arise, shine for our light has come,
R: **And the glory of the Lord has risen upon us**

V: May the light of Jesus Christ our Lord be with you
R: **And also with you**

Engagement:

- Appear unduly excited and explain that you are very pleased because you have received some late Christmas presents.
- Explain that you thought, as a special treat, the children might really enjoy... watching you open them!
- Show the first gift, the "Roses" chocolate shaped parcel - make a big thing about opening it, building up the idea of chocolate and how much you enjoy it. Then reveal the socks - appearing disappointed.
- Never mind - move on to the next gift, the wine bag - say how much you enjoy a glass of wine, again build up to the moment when you stuff your hand inside and pull out a pair of socks, again appearing disappointed.
- Now show the third gift which should be sock shaped - seem very disheartened by the whole experience, predict that this will be socks as well. Unwrap the parcel and let the gold coins spill out.

Development:

- Well that was a surprise! I wasn't expecting that.
 - In fact, for the Wise Men, Jesus turned out to be something they weren't expecting.
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Development & Bible Reading:

- Well that was a surprise! I wasn't expecting that.
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- In fact, for the Wise Men, Jesus turned out to be something they weren't expecting, they came looking for a new king, and Jesus was not at all what they were expecting to find.
 - Listen to the Bible account of the visit of the Wise Men:
 - Matthew 2.1-12
 - The Wise Men first went to a palace, the palace of King Herod, in Jerusalem. That's the sort of place you would expect to find a new born king. But they were in for a surprise.
 - They finally found Jesus in a simple home in Bethlehem, what a surprise, the last place you'd expect to find a new born king.
 - That's how God chose to reveal Jesus to the whole world, not with trumpets, palaces and fine clothes, but in a quiet little town, almost unnoticed. Jesus was not the sort of king that people expected, he came as a big surprise to them.
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Reflection & Prayer:

- Think about a time when we have unwrapped a present expecting something not very exciting and then received a wonderful surprise. Imagine then how the wise men felt when they first saw Jesus, gave their gifts and worshipped him.
- Let us pray.

God be gracious to us and bless us,
and make your face to shine upon us:

Lord, have mercy

R: **Lord, have mercy**

May your ways be known on the earth,
your saving power among the nations:

Christ, have mercy

R: **Christ, have mercy**

You, Lord, have made known your salvation,
and reveal your justice in the sight of the nations:

Lord, have mercy

R: **Lord, have mercy**

Lord, show us your love and light and help us to share these things with others. **Amen.**

Conclusion (May be said together or by the leader):

- **The Grace**

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all, evermore. **Amen.**

Useful References & Publications

New Patterns for Worship

Church House Publishing

ISBN 0-7151-2060-3

An updated version of "Patterns for Worship" a collection of prayers, liturgies and service outlines largely for church use but has a number of different ideas for prayers and simple liturgical responses that may be of use.

All the Assembly Songs You'll Ever Need

Kevin Mayhew

ISMN M 57024 708 0

A brilliant new collection of assembly songs with a distinctive Christian flavour. It includes many old favourites and some interesting new material. It includes many of the songs from the "No pianist for assembly, no problem" series of CD backings. Words editions are also available. This would make a useful replacement for the BBC "Come & Praise" book if you are looking for a healthy change.

Christian Assemblies I & II

ppf publishing

Already purchased by many schools, this is a very useful publication which was available at a discount to Chichester Diocese schools. It has useful material, in various styles, for many key points in the Christian year. The second edition, which will also be available at a special discount, is now available and includes a number of Christmas outlines. Request a form from the Diocesan Schools Department if you wish to take advantage of the special offer.

Common Worship - Times & Seasons

Church House Publishing

ISBN-13 0-7151-2112-2

A useful collection of seasonal material for the Christian Year, particularly helpful in providing liturgical resources to include in school worship. You may be able to access this via your parish priest rather than purchasing a copy for the school.

Together for a Season

Church House Publishing

ISBN 0-7151-4062-0

As recommended by Peter Moger at the Diocesan Headteachers' Conference 2008. The ISBN is for the Advent, Christmas & Epiphany edition. Other seasonal editions are also available. This includes a rich range of outlines, guidance and resources which may be readily used to enhance seasonal worship. Again it may be something worth sharing with the parish church.

www.christianbits.co.uk

www.eden.co.uk

Two useful suppliers of Christian materials, often at an excellent price.
