



A School Act of Collective Worship

Week 1: Children and young people who have suffered trauma

This is the first of five outlines for Collective Worship written to help schools pray, reflect and be encouraged that God created, loves and values all children. The passage is Matthew 19.14.

The thoughts, questions and reflections found in these Collective Worship will lead us to look beyond ourselves. We will find out about those who are in need locally as well as in Israel, Palestine and Zimbabwe. This will help us understand why it is good to pray for and give to the Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call 2025.

Bible passage: Matthew 19.14

Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'

Song

[Who I am](#) by Awesome Cutlery

Gather

Play the song [Who I am](#) by Awesome Cutlery as the children enter the room. This is a song describing how God has created and loves all humans. It tells the worshipper and listener that because we are created, God knows what is best for us and gives us our identity.

Engage

Invite a pupil to come to the front, hold a mirror in front of them and describe their physical attributes e.g. brown hair, eyelashes, glasses. Now ask them to describe their character attributes and gifts e.g. funny, creative, good at spellings. Explain that we have parts to ourselves that are seen and unseen, our physical and personality, character and giftings.

Did you notice the carefully written words of the song as we entered? (You may want to pause the song to display these words):

I am part of something beautiful
Placed by you with care among them all
Every piece unique and different,
Your love shining through
You're the artist, we're the image
Made to be like you

The person is singing about how they believe they are created by God 'with care', God is 'the artist, we're the image'. That they are like Him, 'made to be like you'. Christians would say that we reflect our creator, we bear His image. Not that we *look* like God, as we all look so unique and different, but our characters, interests and gifts reflect God's character, interests and gifts. The singer of the song then says that in order to know who they are, they need to listen to God because He will 'tell me what's true'.

But what happens when life brings tough times that ruin how we see ourselves and spoil parts of our lives? We may know that we are really good at making friends, or remembering facts, or using kind words to help others. We may know that we have the skill of running fast, or playing the piano, or creating a world in *Minecraft*. Yet, then something might happen to stop us seeing we have these beautiful parts to us. A person might destroy the friendship, tell us our facts are silly or ignore our kind words. Perhaps we might go wrong at the piano or our running might be slower than someone who has joined the class. Events can leave us feeling less than unique and it's hard for love to shine through. *Hold the mirror up again and drape a piece of thin fabric over it.* We can still see ourselves, but the image may not be entirely clear.

Ask the pupils: When this happens, how can we remember the good parts to ourselves? The gifts, character and ways we've been created? As pupils suggest ways, you remove the fabric slowly as suggestions are made, or dramatically each time a suggestion is made and then replaced for the next suggestion. If it hasn't been mentioned, tell the children that Christians go back to God to find out who they truly are.



Sometimes children go through very, very hard things that could stop them thinking they are unique, loved and made in the image of God. These events can be as sad as someone experiencing violence, knowing someone close to them who has died, moving away from a family member or leaving a home because of war. Our experiences have a big impact on the way we see ourselves.

Place a thick piece of fabric over the mirror.

These events stop the person from seeing a lot of life in the way we are designed to. These events can be called trauma or traumatic events. They can shake someone's life so much that they find it very hard to know who they are and understanding themselves perhaps as God has designed them to. Another way of understanding trauma is to think that it is like putting on a pair of spectacles or glasses that are not clear. Everything the person looks at has changed. *You may have a pair of glasses that can be covered in a colour or fabric.*

Respond

Display Matthew 19:14. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). He invited **every** child, even when others tried to prevent them, as children in those days were seen as less important than adults in his time.

There are three key points here:

- 1 Jesus told adults not to stop the children from coming to him.
- 2 Jesus said the kingdom of heaven belongs to children—a place full of love and goodness where all are welcome.
- 3 Jesus welcomed all children, including those who had experienced trauma and saw the world differently, offering them love, belonging, and healing. Not just the tallest, funniest, fastest or kindest, but **all** the children. This also includes the children who have experienced trauma, those who have seen and experienced things that mean they see the world in a different way to others. A bit like wearing glasses that change the way you see things. Jesus says they belong with him, he wants to spend time with them and remind them of who they are created to be, perhaps even help them take the glasses off and see the world clearly again.

Christians believe Jesus works through others – like caring charities and supportive schools. During Lent, a 40-day period beginning on March 5th, Christians reflect, pray, and prepare for Easter. Many give things up or take on new things, praying for those in need, including children facing trauma, war, and natural disasters. We can pray for ourselves, our families, and our communities – this Lent schools and churches across Southwark are especially praying for people who need extra help like those who have experienced trauma. We will also remember children and young people around the world who are going through tough times because of war, fighting, or natural disasters.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you that you welcome all children. Thank you that you want to heal hurt and you want to change hearts. As we think about healing from trauma this Lent, please would you use people like us to join you in this work. Would children know that they are part of something beautiful, placed by you with care among us all. That every piece unique and different, your love shining through. That you are the artist, we're the image, made and healed to be like you. Amen

A reflection

Consider the verse from Matthew 19 and the mirror covered in fabric or the glasses that stop us seeing well.

Q: Do Christians believe Jesus says you have to be perfect to come to him? *No, Christians would say that Jesus invites us to be with him and then His Holy Spirit will gently change us.*

Q: If we have fabric over the mirror, how can we see the image in the mirror better? *By removing the fabric.* How do we do that in our lives so we see ourselves more clearly? *By listening to the kind words of others and listening to who God says we are; chosen, loved, created, seen, healed of hurt.*

Q: What could our prayer be for those who have experienced trauma which means there is a lot stopping them from seeing who they are? *Pray for God and people to help them see themselves for who they truly are. For their hurt to be healed.*

