

Ten:ten

#flourishing

Diocesan Education Team Project 2021



Our Vision : Deeply Christian, Serving The Common Good



Introduction

Two years ago while visiting my family in the USA, at Ground Zero in NY City we gathered under *The Survivor Tree*, then sat in silence pondering on the amazing story behind the now-flourishing natural gift to the community and memorial site.

October 2001 - one month after the devastation of the collapsed Twin Towers, some workers were removing the still-smoking rubble. An incredible moment occurred. Poking through the crumbled grey concrete and ash some live, green leaves were visible.

The workers carefully uncovered the tree : most of her limbs had been sheared off, and only a few roots remained, but the green leaves were a sign of hope that she could be saved.

For nine years the tree was tended and loved at a nursery, and the Callery Pear Tree was returned to a place of honour, near where it had lived, in the newly- named 9/11 Memorial Plaza.

I often re-read the picture book we bought that day. It's a metaphor for hope, endurance and flourishing, even when the odds seem stacked against it. I was reminded of it recently when a flyer dropped out of the predictable bundle in the Sunday Supplement titled *The Tree That Should Never Have Grown*. The charity *Practical Action* requested a donation to fund families severely affected by extreme weather events in North Darfur, Sudan. A smiling woman who had planted an Acacia Tree that flourished, was beaming from the flyer. In this context where families are losing their homes, crops and livelihoods, planting life-changing trees to prevent desertification is critical.

Thinking about such things, and especially being practically involved, not only helps other people, the environment, the climate and creation, but also has a tangible impact on our own well being and mental health.

There has been a great deal of research highlighting the benefit to child mental health of spending time in wild places. By exploring their natural environment, children and adults have opportunities to think and speak about their relationship with the world in which they live, how they feel about themselves, their relationships with others, the world and their faith.

Our 2021 **Ten Ten # flourishing** project is focussed on developing spiritual wellness in our school communities. Our aim is that children and adults in our schools will learn, worship, pray and meditate in the great outdoors to support positive mental wellbeing for both pupils and staff.

This project draws on contemporary research that shows being involved with nature improves child and adult mental health. At the same time, it is a project that focuses on ancient Christian traditions when sacred places and practices were outside.

Tough problems need ingenious solutions, and the Education Team wishes to support school communities with practical advice and activities to improve mental health at this challenging time for schools. It is important for our school leaders to nurture their own mental health and to support employee wellbeing during this time. Therefore, this year's project is for the whole school community, not just pupils.

Sometimes of course, as adults we will not see the long-term impact of our immediate actions, whether those are impacting on the environment, or on the mental and spiritual health of the children with whom we learn. But we earnestly commit ourselves to the privilege of serving them. Somewhat like the allegorical tale of Elzeard Bouffier – *The Man Who Planted Trees*. This is subtle parable of the life-giving shepherd who chooses to carry out the work of God for over forty years in the desolate hills and lifeless villages, with only partial knowledge and sight of the enormity of his commitment and service.

This Project Booklet contains some suggestions for developing spiritual wellness for the school community. This includes active, physical projects, as well as stilling activities. Many resources for the activities are free of charge and use things found in the natural environment, regardless of whether your school or church in an urban, rural or coastal setting.

Our hope and desire is that by the end of the academic year, each of our schools will have created an outdoor Spiritual Space – be that a Garden, a Sunflower or Willow construction, or just re-thinking and presenting an existing area of the school grounds. Lots of ideas are in the booklet, but do let us know of more!

So I invite you to join us in **Planting Hope and Reaping Happiness**. Feel free to share this resource booklet widely!

Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves.

Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other.

No matter how difficult it is... Life is good when you are happy; but much better when others are happy because of you.

Best wishes

Jeff

Jeff Williams
Director of Education



The project title **Ten Ten #flourishing** is derived from John's Gospel Chapter 10 Verse 10 : I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

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Why go outside?

'Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God. But only he who sees, takes off his shoes.' Elizabeth Barrett Browning

According to the mental health charity Mind, spending time in green space or bringing nature into everyday life, can benefit both mental and physical wellbeing. Activities like growing food or flowers, exercising outdoors or being around animals can have numerous positive effects. They can:

- improve mood
- reduce feelings of stress or anger
- help you take time out and feel more relaxed
- improve physical health
- improve confidence and self-esteem
- help you be more active



It is hoped that being involved in one, some or all of the projects in this booklet will contribute to improving children's and adults mental health and provide a common ground for shared experience of God's wonderful world.



Throughout this booklet, you will see this emblem. This flags where the suggested activity links to an element of learning/ a lesson in the accompanying RE scheme of work (attached at the end of this booklet). Some of these ideas reflect elements of learning found in the Understanding

Christianity resource.

Blue text indicates a Bible reference related to the activity. Schools are encouraged to use these to enhance children's learning and understanding.

Recognising Spiritual Development

The Stapleford Centre in Nottingham completed helpful work looking at spirituality through the concepts of windows, mirrors and doors. Many schools now use this vocabulary to teach children how to recognise their own spiritual development. A basic outline of this is below:

MIRROR MOMENTS: Give children opportunities to *reflect* on their experiences; to *meditate* on life's big questions and to consider some possible answers. In this they are learning *from* life by exploring their own insights and perspectives and those of others.

WINDOW MOMENTS: Give children opportunities to become *aware* of the world in new ways; to *wonder* about life's 'WOWs' (things that are amazing) and 'OWs' (things that bring us up short). Children learn *about* life in all its fullness.

DOOR MOMENTS: Give children opportunities to *respond* to all of this; to **do** something creative as a means of expressing, applying and further developing their thoughts and convictions. In this they are learning to *live* by putting into action what they are coming to believe and value.

CANDLE MOMENTS: Give children opportunities to think beyond all this: to think of what is higher: something that they cannot see, but perhaps feel or see reflected in the words and actions of others or the stories from their faith or beliefs.



Spiritual Wellness is a personal matter for each individual but something nevertheless that universally involves the values and beliefs that provide a purpose for our lives.

Trees of Hope

For the Ten Ten # flourishing project, the Diocesan Education Team is again working with Richard Pollard (formerly of Kew Gardens and now leading The Tree Council National Schools Programme). Richard was involved in our hugely popular Bee Inspired project and has been working with us on developing an orchard planting offer to schools that will teach children resilience and connectivity using the example of trees.

Working in collaboration the Orchards for Schools and Tree Champions projects outlined below have been written through the lens of developing spirituality wellness, connectivity with God's Creation and the teaching of Christianity in our schools.



Trees feature through the whole story of the Bible and are present at nearly every major occurrence. From the tree of knowledge in Genesis, the wisdom of Solomon who was said to have a great knowledge of plant life to the burning bush and finally to the tree on which Jesus was crucified nailed to his own creation, we encounter trees in the heart of worship ([more references to trees in the Bible can be found at the end of this booklet to aid teachers](#)).

Trees appeal to all the senses, fresh smells, the sound of moving leaves and birdsong, the texture of the bark – all of these are appealing, especially in modern towns and cities. Trees connect us to other people, whether our contemporaries or those in the past or future.

By planting saplings that may take years to become fully grown, children are offering a gift of God's creation to other children yet to be born. That in itself should be a pretty good feeling! The Orchards for Schools and Young Tree Champions projects set up by The Tree Council are two related projects but schools can apply for each individually or both.

Orchards for Schools



Orchards for schools has been setup in partnership with the Daily Mail. All diocesan schools are encouraged to apply for a FREE orchard tree pack, or fruiting hedgerow pack by using the link below:

<https://treecouncil.org.uk/schools-and-education/orchards-for-schools/>

Schools will receive a pack containing five mixed fruit trees or 30 fruiting hedgerow samplings. Five trees or more constitutes an orchard. The pack will contain all the advice needed on preparing the ground, planting, connecting, caring and sharing in unlocking the wonder of trees. There will be helpful resources that can be downloaded from the website including a simple application guidance and a planner. There will also be a gift box that schools can receive to fill with prayers, photographs, memories and poems etc of their project, and then gift to another neighbouring school complete with an invitation to encourage their neighbouring school to apply for their own orchard tree pack.

Teachers will be able to join a training webinar with Richard Pollard and partners Learning through Landscapes in which they will discuss the project, activities and a simple guide on the tree planting process to ensure the success of the trees.

“We have consulted with teachers and heads from across the UK this summer to understand the demands that are currently being placed on schools during the COVID crisis. Subsequently the project is being tailored to help schools have some fun, reconnect with each other and catch up in core subjects, specifically English. After such difficult times this is a special opportunity for schools to look forward to a better world and help create a healthier future for all life on Earth”, said Richard.

Young Tree Champions, in partnership with M&G plc.

This is a really exciting project which is being designed to help schools and environmental educators enable children to find their voice for nature, a skills based project that enhances the Orchards for Schools activity inspiring children to practise and explore their hidden



Schools receive a toolkit of activities that use the story of trees to build children’s self-esteem. The toolkit includes a compassion quiz and links with the popular Roots and Shoots worship that is well-embedded in many Church schools. The toolkit focusses on learning about the resilience of trees, their interdependence on each other and their work in helping the environment around them. Children will learn to recognise key behaviours and patterns that they can copy and apply to their own feelings and actions.

The project includes an offer for representatives of the Speakers Trust to visit schools to help less confident children 'find their voice.' This workshop can be offered online if Covid restrictions continue.

Trees fight drought, prevent soil erosion, stabilize earth, shade us from sun, are key in the conservation of water, provide us with heat, control the effects of wind, provide shelter for animals and encourage biodiversity and nutrients for soil. So, by planting their own beautiful trees, pupils will not only thank God for trees being beautiful; but thank God for creating trees as one of the most valuable things on the planet with lessons for us all.

On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22:2

Tree-related activities that schools may like to take part in to run alongside the tree-planting project are below.

The Tree of Life

The book of Revelation (that last book of the Bible) talks about a future time when the garden of Eden will be restored:

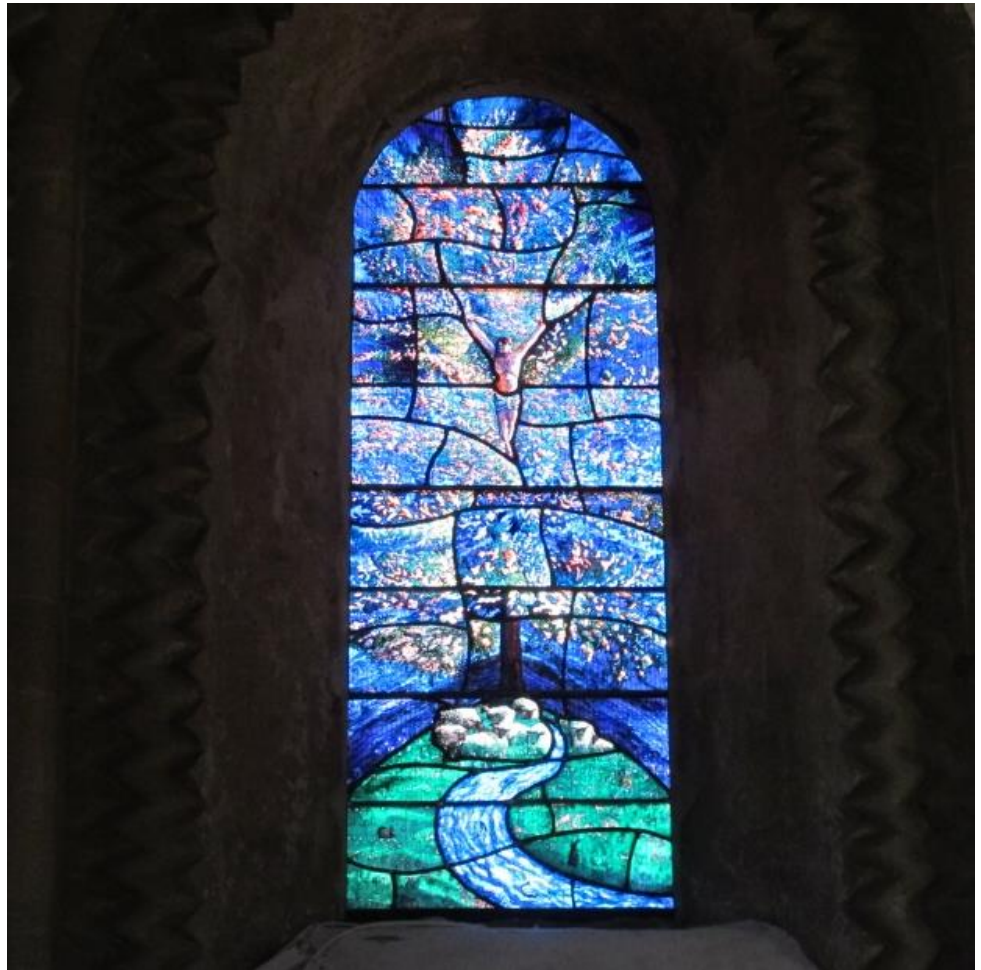
Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. (Chapter 22, verses 1-2)



These verses picture Jesus himself as the tree of life whose leaves heal all divisions, wars, hatred and violence in the world. There is a beautiful stained glass window illustrating this in a church near Oxford (St Mary the Virgin, Iffley)

For this time of restoration to come, we all need to be at peace within ourselves so that we can forgive the hurt that others may have caused us.

When the children have made the leaves from the activity below, they could be used as a prayer space activity or simply displayed as prayers that through Jesus, all people may come together in forgiveness and healing



The Tree of Life can be used as a metaphor to encourage children discuss their feelings.

Ask the children to think of a tree, its roots, trunk and branches. Go outside and look at different species of trees, their shape. Discuss the roots that lie beneath the surface.

Using large pieces of paper, ask the children to draw a simple tree, making sure they leave enough space for writing. Teachers are advised to do a whole class tree first to show the children what they need to create.

The tree of life is first described in Genesis chapter 2, verse 9 as being 'in the midst of the Garden of Eden.' The term "tree of life" also appears in Proverbs (3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4) and Revelation (2:7; 22:2,14,19).

Leaf Template 4

Here is the fourth of our printable leaf templates, available in three different sizes. This one is a little trickier to cut out

Rip some yellow, orange, red, brown and green art tissue paper into small pieces.



Paint part of the leaf template with water and stick on the tissue paper, adding lots more water over the top to make sure the tissue paper is stuck down. Keep adding more water and tissue paper until the leaf is covered. Leave to dry.



When the tissue paper dries, it peels off easily leaving a lovely mix of colours, which will fade a bit too. When the tissue paper dries, it peels off easily leaving a lovely mix of colours, which will fade a little.



Making Natural Paints

Make the most of your outdoor time by collecting some materials together for a painting session later - using paints that you make yourselves with nature's offerings!

Berries:

Mush together some berries with water. Make sure you use non-toxic berries. Blackberries for are great for purple.

Rosehips:

Rosehips produce red 'paint'. Soak the rosehips in boiling water for a couple of hours to soften first and remove the seeds.

Mud:

Stir warm water into some dry mud to make brown paint.

Grass and leaves:

Soak grass in boiling water over night, and strained the next morning, for green. You can also rub some leaves directly onto paper, but make sure you don't use any with irritating sap.

Flowers:

Rub dandelions onto paper for a yellow colour.



Prayer activity with sticks

Children find two sticks and snap them to make them the same length. They call one 'day' and one 'night'.

As they hold each stick, ask the children to think of the things that they do in the day and in the night; things that they do that everyone sees and things that they may do when no one is around; things that they hope for and things that they fear.

Focus on the sticks, their weight in each hand and think about asking God to show you how to hold your life in balance.



Andy Goldsworthy

Famous sculptor and photographer, Andy Goldsworthy not only works *with* nature, but *in* nature.

In his artwork, stones, rocks, branches, twigs, leaves and ice are arranged carefully and patiently, making use of various repeated snaking lines, spirals, circles and holes. A collection of his work can be seen following the link below:

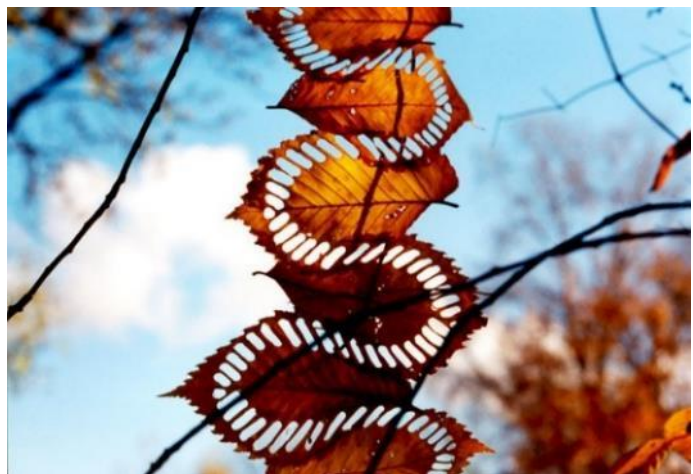
https://youtu.be/B4jV87O_cMI

Schools will find a variety of YouTube films of Goldsworthy discussing his art. In the film below, he talks about his art being connected to something deep within nature. This may provide an interesting start to a discussion on connectivity.

<https://youtu.be/l051gmxvDIE>



Goldsworthy's work is often used as a stimulus in schools to create natural artwork in the outdoors (see left).



For the Ten Ten #flourishing project, schools are encouraged to focus on those pieces in which Goldsworthy places himself in the centre of his art (see below).



This will give the children an added sense of connecting with the environment and being physically part of the creative process. Involve the children in creating large pieces of art in which they feature and then consider creating a photo album of the creations.



Walking to Wellness

As many of us know, walking is an excellent way to maintain not only physical but mental health. Encouraging children from an early age to walk regularly sets them up with positive habits later in life.

Walking to improve mental health does not have to be gentle or slow. A brisk walk through around the field, playground or along the road can be equally invigorating and inspiring.

Schools should follow the latest government Covid 19 guidelines for these activities.

Walking has been proven to encourage feelings of calm and happiness. It is also a great way for children to explore God's world in all its various forms, feeding their curiosity and promoting independence.

Below are four ways in which walking can help improve mental well-being.

1. Connecting with Nature

Lack of connection with the outdoors is now considered to be one of the major factors in the rise in child mental health problems. Spending time outdoors allows children to clear their heads and connect with God's creation.



Getting children outside and walking even 15 minutes a day can naturally expose them to vitamin D and have a positive impact on their mental wellbeing.

2. Reduce Chances of Developing Depression

The number of children developing mental health issues such as depression and anxiety has soared: one in four teenagers now experiences depression. Physical activities such as walking can help prevent children developing depression. One study conducted on children between the ages of 6 and 8 found that moderate exercise leads to fewer symptoms of depression in those same children 2 years later.

3. Better Concentration

A Danish study conducted on 20,000 children between the ages of 5 and 19 found that children who walked or cycled to school have better concentration. The children were asked to perform a number of concentration-based tasks such as solving puzzles.

4. Improved Sleep Patterns

Sleep is vital to child development, affecting their behaviour, memory and social skills. Encouraging your child to walk throughout the day can help ensure they develop into a happy and healthy adult.



Spiritual walking

Walking from a place of relaxed intention is a freeing practice. Schools planning on bringing regular walking into the timetable for pupils, may like to talk to the children first about the act of waking as an ancient spiritual practice.

Following a track with the children (or as a staff team) can develop into a prayerful activity—the hypnotizing rhythm of the action of walking helps instill feelings of calm

Since we live by the Spirit,
Let us keep in step with the
Spirit.

Galatians 5:25

Jesus walked from town to town healing the sick.

Mahatma Gandhi walked 150 miles on the infamous Salt March that forever changed the future of India. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. walked the roads of Alabama and Georgia, and the Quaker Susan B Anthony spent her life walking for the right of women to vote in America.

Pilgrimages are a part of every spiritual tradition. Jews go to Jerusalem, Christians go to the Holy Land and Muslims go to Mecca.

Ask children to imagine something they want to learn or focus on before you leave on your

walk, and tell them that when they return they will have gone on their own journey and have been part of a Christian tradition. On your walk notice the birds, the sky, the clouds, the trees, the sounds, the smells and colour. Your walk is packed with a kaleidoscope of possibilities. Walk with a safe number of children and adults to ensure that they can be socially distant. Allow walkers to spend some time alone for some introspection, reflection or prayer time



Walk with reflections

Walking with reflections is a simple activity and can be calming for both children and staff. The idea is to walk as a group (socially distant if necessary) and stop a few times to listen to a site-specific Bible reading, a prayer, poem or meditation. To prepare this activity, you will need a route in mind that has a few useful features such as a bridge, a crossroads, an old tree etc. This will help you put together a theme that connect the features with the material that you want to read. Hopefully, in this way, walkers will end up making an external and an internal journey.

A good way to start is to ask the group to walk in silence for three periods (perhaps five minutes each) where they focus only on what they can see, then to focus on what they can

hear and , lastly, on what they can feel (their feet on the pavement, the clothes against their skin, their balance or perhaps the air on their face).

A similar suggestion, maybe for a later walk, is to have the group walk in silence and solitude with 20 metres between each person. If someone stops to make a note or to look at something, then everyone else has to stop too.



To teach younger children to take part in mindful or prayerful walking, the image of the snail could be used:

Slow down

Notice things

Appreciate what is around you

Investigate and Imagine

Live thoughtfully and thankfully



Digging deeper

The analogy of walking and the Christian life is used throughout Scripture. Schools may like to talk further on this with older children by exploring what it means to 'walk with God.' It is not merely living by rules and regulations or making daily resolutions that we quickly break. It is much more than that.

The prophet Amos revealed what it means to walk with God when he asked, "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). The word he used for "together" gives the idea of two people moving in rhythm together, as in riding a tandem bicycle. But it is not about getting God into rhythm with us; it is getting ourselves

into rhythm with Him. That is what it means to walk with God. Here is a discussion starter that schools may like to use:

If I walked with a friend of mine and I started speeding up and tried to leave him behind, then he'd wonder what I was mad at. If I walked behind him and slowed way down, he might wonder if I was hurt or injured. If we were walking together, we might not agree on everything but we wouldn't have to fall out. How can people walk together and show grace when they don't agree?

Gracious words are a honeycomb,
sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. Proverbs
16:24

Walking activities to build into busy timetables

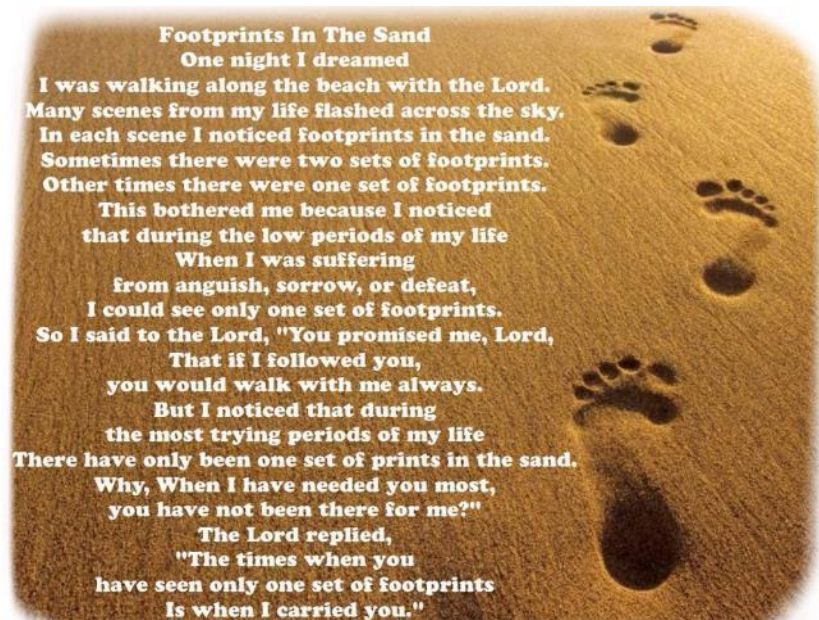
- Fast or slow walks of awareness - synchronise breathing with your steps – this could be a helpful mindfulness activity to prepare the mind and body for productive learning.
- 'Sauntering' – derived from the French phrase 'à la sainte terre' which means 'to the Holy Ground'. It reminds children and adults of a different way of moving – not always rushing breathlessly from A to B.

These two ideas could be linked to schools doing the daily mile. Consider a half-mile walk carried out slowly and mindfully as described above.

"Footprints," also known as "Footprints in the Sand," is a popular allegorical religious poem that schools may like to use whilst walking with children.

This popular text is based on Christian beliefs and describes an experience in which someone is walking on a beach with God. They leave two sets of footprints in the sand. The tracks represent stages of the speaker's life. At various points the two trails

of prints merge to one, especially at the lowest and most hopeless moments of the person's life. When questioning God, believing that the Lord must have abandoned him during those times, God gives the explanation, "During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."



'Sit Spots'

Having a familiar place within the school grounds to be alone to think or reflect can be powerful for some children. A 'sit spot' is simply a favorite place in nature that children can visit regularly to reflect or to study patterns of local plants, birds, trees, animals, etc.



By choosing one place outside that they visit over and over again, children can develop the self-awareness and gradually acquire enhanced sensitivity to God's world.

With practice, this activity is said to facilitate a transformation of some children's ability to observe patterns through all aspects of the outdoors and help them develop a greater understanding of their involvement in the world around them.

It is also a place where children can connect with their faith. For a child, their sit spot can become a place for contemplation or meditation, sometimes in what is happening around them, and other times on issues that they have brought with them to their spot.

The instructions below may be helpful for teachers wanting to develop this practice in schools.

- Choose one spot in the school grounds where you feel comfortable and safe and move to it slowly and peacefully
- Look around at where you are...
- Notice what's happening with the plants, trees & birds of this place
- Are there birds? Insects?
- Listen to the sounds, smell the air, open your eyes to all that you can see
- You are sitting in the middle of God's wonderful world
- Try to breathe slowly and gently
- Think about the peace of this place
- Pay attention to whatever is present in this environment, and tuck it away in your memory so you can think about it if you ever feel anxious

Dew Ponds

*'Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace,
the beauty of thy peace.'*

To begin this activity, it is worth teaching children the hymn 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind', notably the verse above.

It is a hymn with words taken from a longer poem, "The Brewing of Soma" by American Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier. The language may appear very old-fashioned for children, but unpicking the meaning behind this verse and the final verse of the hymn is likely to lead to some interesting discussions on the power of God in nature.



The follow up activity for this is a study of dew ponds. Dew ponds are artificial ponds often found on high ground for livestock to drink and rest in areas where surface water is not easily accessible; the practice dates back to at least Saxon times.

This activity is simple and does not take a great deal of time. Simply create a 'dew pond moment' in everyone's schedule (children and adults); everyone should pause to breathe more deeply, to give thanks and to refresh yourself, ready for the next challenge of the day.

Who needs a mountain?

The Bible is full of mountains, in fact mountains and hills are mentioned more than 500 times in Scripture. Many of Jesus' pivotal sermons occurred on mountain tops. For many Christian, mountains remain a place to experience God.

In the Old Testament, the mountains of Sinai and Zion are most significant. Mount Sinai is the place where Moses received the Ten Commandments. Thus, Mount Sinai is a symbol of God's covenant with Israel. Zion is the location of the Jerusalem Temple. In the New Testament Jesus appoints the 12 disciples on a



mountain. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Mount, conjuring an image of Moses who received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

Perhaps the most significant mountain scene in the Gospels, however, is the Transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17:1-13).

Rachel Summers in her book *Wild Worship* suggests that, no matter where children are, they can find a 'mountain' to climb. It may turn out to be a slight incline, a set of long stairs, climbing to the top of a multi-storey car park or, if lucky enough, a hill in the countryside. Walking to the top of something can help to shine a new light on things.

But those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint. *Isaiah*
40:31

The book suggests spending time preparing for the climb – checking clothing, the route and equipment. Then, when the walk begins, discuss the preparations that had to be made and how that may reflect a Christian journey of faith. What is the spiritual equivalent of walking boots for example.

Once at the top, encourage children to look back down the route and talk about which bits were easiest and the hardest. Then ask if the trickier bits look so tricky from the top. Ask the children when someone had to help them, holding a hand out to steady them for example, and discuss how this can reflect our lives. Ask the children to discuss what their next step would be, if they had a view into the future where would they be and what help may they need. Who could they ask for help? You may like to offer a chance for prayer or reflection before heading back.

Prayers and reflections

The Diocesan Education Team has already distributed practical prayer activities to support schools during the pandemic. However, below are several suggestions for reflection and prayer with an emphasis on 'noticing':



- Marvel with a magnifying glass – allow children time to look closely at things, perhaps with a magnifying glass and marvel at minute beauty in nature before giving thanks.
- Look out for insignificant things that you might ordinarily miss. Consider why they might actually be significant and what would happen/how would you feel if they were not there.

Schools may like to record anonymous comments from pupils and adults; display them in a communal space. In a similar way, identify a part of the school grounds you treasure. Contemplate it and give thanks for it. Can you articulate why it is special to you? Give children/adults a digital camera and ask them to take pictures of these places for the display.

- 'Soft Eyes' – children and adults stand outside for a few minutes nice and still and with a relaxed gaze. Do not focus on any one thing in particular. Try to breathe slowly and sense the world around you. This is a relaxing and meditative process.
- Try physical ways of praying. After a vigorous walk or run, ask the children to simply try lying down in the school field or playground, and feel their bodies supported by the earth. Ask the children to relax in the moment and feel part of creation. Watch the clouds –do nothing but watch them for a few moments. Breathe in God's air as if it were God's love.
- On a clear day in the autumn/winter when it gets dark early, watch a sunset and give thanks for the events of the day. Perhaps arrange for the children to arrive at school for the sunrise and give thanks for the new day ahead!



All these ideas above could also be considered as prayer/reflection and incorporated into class worship if time in the day is difficult to find.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

Godly Play worship promoting Spiritual Wellness

Godly Play UK, in association with the Church Schools of Cambridge, has support the launch of a new, free resource.

Developed by teacher-researcher Elisabeth Sutcliffe, this new resource draws on the Godly Play style and process. Its approach helps to create a different atmosphere within the classroom that provides for reflection as a class and individually. Using story, wondering and imaginative response time, pupils' spiritual wellbeing is given focus and value.

It offers teachers accessible, simple-to-follow material that requires almost no additional resources. Children are given space to wonder and respond to Covid-19 pandemic challenges and opportunities. [A short guidance video](#) is included, alongside four acts of worship (more to be released soon).

<https://www.godlyplay.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Collective-Worship-Autumn-2020.pdf>

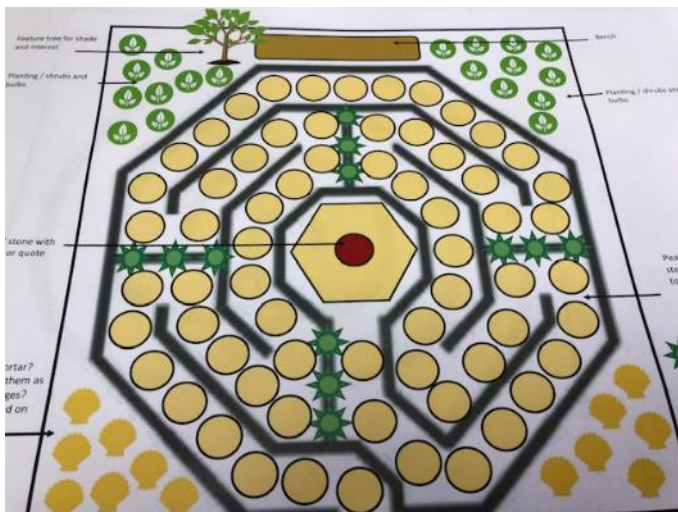
Developing a Spiritual Garden at your school

A spiritual garden is a place where children and adults can sit quietly and enjoy the peace and calm of natural surroundings. The garden may contain a range of features representing elements that are important to the community using it. There may be a wonderful array of plants which stimulate the senses with their bright colours, fragrance and textures; the soothing sounds of a wind chime; a beautiful bird bath; a cross or Christian symbol that reflects the foundation of the school; stepping stones and paved areas; fountain or water feature as a reminder of Jesus as the 'Water of Life'; seats, benches, raised timber planting beds, and lighting. Natural stone may suggest silence and strength, the wooden features and trees provide a sense of warmth and shelter. The list goes on.

If space allows a maze or labyrinth might be considered. There are no set rules.

Gardens may be any size or shape and will be dependent upon the particular context of the school. For example, some schools have made use of a quadrangle in the centre of the building to establish a quiet, reflective area, such as the garden at St James Church of England Primary School in West End, pictured here.

This provides a quiet contemplative place for children and staff to visit before, during and after school.



From a plan to reality at St James.



In addition to the suggestions above, it may be that a new school is able to incorporate an architectural feature of the previous building such as a bell. Willow sculptures, gazebos and so on may also form part of the garden. Whatever is included should contribute to the feeling of a special sacred space for the whole school community.

Developing a garden

It is good to involve as wide a range of stakeholders as is practicable in the planning and ideas for the garden. Ensure that everyone understands the vision for the project and the benefits that will ensue. Many people can be involved in the creation, for example, by designing, planting, landscaping, building structures, laying a patio, donating plants and lots more. Some tips to bear in mind:

- Do some research and find examples of existing gardens (see below). This can stimulate ideas to get you started.
- Begin the actual design process by discussing and sketching lots of ideas—everyone who wants to can have a go. In one school, children and parents built models of their garden designs which made a fabulous display.
- Select a working party team of ‘experts’ to collate designs and draw up a final plan for implementation.
- Make garden spot plan layouts on graph paper to scale.
- Consider future maintenance and development of your garden.

Finally, don’t be afraid to ‘phone a friend’. Schools who have been through a similar process will be only too pleased to share their expertise. The following schools are happy to help:



St James Church of England Primary, West End
Alverstoke Church of England Junior School
(pictured above and left)

Longparish Church of England Primary School
St Albans Church of England Primary School,
Havant (pictured below)

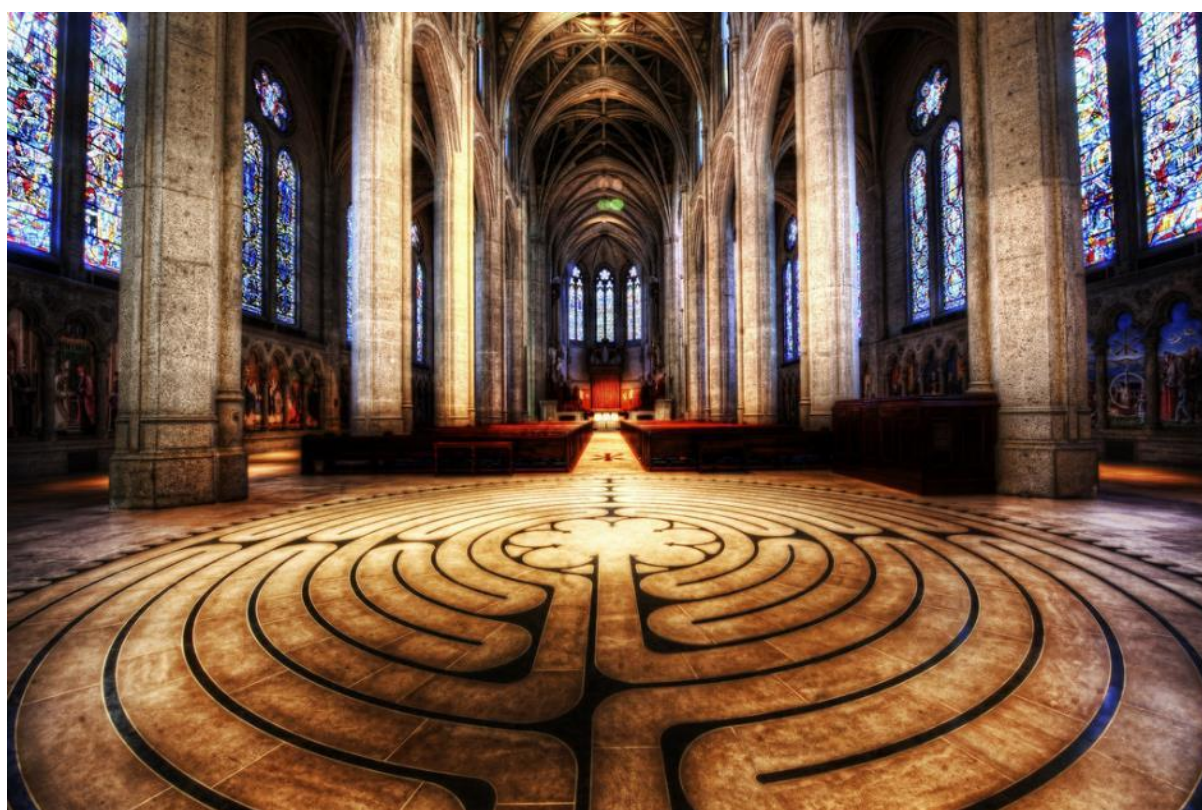
Breamore Church of England Primary School in
the New Forest



Labyrinth - A path to the core

But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. Deuteronomy 4:29

Labyrinths can be found in churches across the world and many cathedrals have portable labyrinths that people can use. One of the most famous labyrinths can be found at Chartres Cathedral in France (below) which dates back to 1205. Pilgrims travel from all around the world to use the Chartres labyrinth. The idea is that, as pilgrims walk around it, they walk towards God. At the central point, the person comes to the center of his or her relationship with God.



Labyrinths have existed for more than 4,000 years with labyrinth stone wall carvings dating back to the Bronze Age. Labyrinths have been featured in Greek and Roman mythology and, in the Middle Ages, they started to appear in churches around the world. Labyrinths have been used by many different cultures and religions across time as they have been known to be used for relaxation, meditation and prayer that can bring spiritual and



emotional well-being to the lives of those who used them. Sometimes labyrinths are described as the outward sign of an inner pilgrimage.

Labyrinths can be found in hospital gardens, parks, schools and home gardens as they are known for their meditative properties.

What is a Labyrinth?

A Labyrinth is **not** a maze; a maze has blind dead ends that are used to confuse and trick the mind. A labyrinth is a spiral course having a single, winding unobstructed path from the outside to the centre that is used to calm and relax.



Finger Labyrinths – start simple

A finger labyrinth is similar to a full sized labyrinth you would walk, except it is on a much smaller and more portable scale. The user traces the path to the centre using your finger rather than with their feet. There are many different kinds of labyrinths differing in size and complexity.

Finger Labyrinths are known to help children relax, feel better when they are sad or scared, deal with situations when they feel ashamed or embarrassed and help them to concentrate.

Finger Labyrinth Meditation.

1. Take deep breaths to begin to relax and focus on the entrance to the labyrinth.
2. Place your pointer finger from your non-dominant hand on the entrance of the labyrinth. If you find this too awkward at first, use your dominant hand. However, over time, keep trying your non-dominant hand. This helps keep the mind focused on the meditation due to the challenge it presents.
3. Slowly trace the pattern of the labyrinth with your finger allowing your mind to clear from extra thought and focus solely on following the path of the labyrinth.
4. “Walk” to the centre of the labyrinth and rest momentarily, taking deep breaths observing how you are feeling.
5. Retrace your path out of the labyrinth.
6. Sit back, breathe deeply and relax. Observe how you are feeling again.

Note: The same steps apply for a Walking Labyrinth, except you slowly walk the path.



Free Printable Finger Labyrinths are available using the link below:

<http://www.relax4life.com/paperlabyrinths.html>

Other Activities:

- Instructions on making your own Finger Labyrinth using Play Dough can be found here: <https://educationsvoice.wordpress.com/2017/03/09/mindfulness-in-the-classroom-using-play-dough-part-2/>
- Make a 3-D Finger Labyrinth: <http://heatherplett.com/2015/01/make-finger-labyrinth-also-piece-art/>
- Challenge the children to create their own Finger Labyrinths by drawing or using small objects on a flat surface or drawing one in sand/salt/rice.
- Create Walking Labyrinths using jumping ropes, construction bricks, cones, bean bags, chalk etc. outside or in the hall for children to walk.
- Challenge children to create their own Walking Labyrinths using jumping ropes, construction bricks, cones, bean bags, etc. outside or in the hall for children to walk.



Children respond immediately to the pattern of a labyrinth. Of course, they first want to race to the middle and out again as fast as they can but with some training labyrinths can be used to support a wide range of learning, including dealing with grief, problem solving, conflict resolution, building community and celebrating joyful events. Many teachers have found ways to use the labyrinth to enrich learning experiences and a place for the whole school community to find peace and calm.

Children and labyrinths

According to the renowned Real School Gardens Project in America, teachers in schools that have labyrinths report that walking the labyrinth can help children calm down, focus and concentrate. It can help children relax if they are angry. If you give a Finger Labyrinth to a child of almost any age, they will almost immediately begin tracing the pattern with their pointer finger. It is thought that moving through the left and right turns of the Labyrinth helps a person shift out of the linear left brain into the right brain, which is more spatially oriented and creative. Our right brain gives us our “Ah ha” moments when we suddenly figure out problems or are able to think outside the box.

Using what you have

The creation of a school labyrinth can lend itself to community project. Heavy lifting and practical design will encourage dads, grandads or even the local sports team/keep fit club to get involved.

The construction of a labyrinth can be remarkably simple. The most basic, and easiest, way to build a labyrinth is to place stones on the earth to form the pattern. The school may want to have a base of gravel, coarse sand or bark on which to place the stones. The benefit of children bringing the rocks to be used is that they feel a part of the construction. If the whole school brings in rocks, perhaps each class could have a way of identifying 'their' rocks. The stones should be about the size of a grapefruit - small stones make the task tedious and can be easily displaced.

In the grounds of the school, any turf can be removed and bark chips placed directly on top. Broken tiles or stones can be used to create the lines of the labyrinth. This lack of formality means that the labyrinth is very easy to change. Different or changing layouts can reflect interest, ability and emotional need of the children.

Other possibilities are paint on pavement, playing field liner on grass or earth, bricks or tiles buried in grass, bottles buried in the ground, short stubs of branches set on end in the ground or temporary labyrinths of almost any materials. Schools may like to consider creating labyrinths based on particular emotions, Christian values or a Bible story.

Encourage the participants to paint stones to put in the labyrinth. Stones can represent family members, local groups, classes, subjects, Christian values or emotions. Consider starting a labyrinth book which might include:

- Journal experiences from the children (e.g. What did you like about building the labyrinth? What was it like to walk the labyrinth the first time? Other experiences?)
- Photos taken before, during and after construction
- Drawings of labyrinths by the children
- Samples of curriculum projects that relate to building and using the labyrinth
- Results of student research. (a good website to start with is : www.labyrinthsociety.org and www.veriditas.net.)

Christian artist Hannah Dunnett joins project

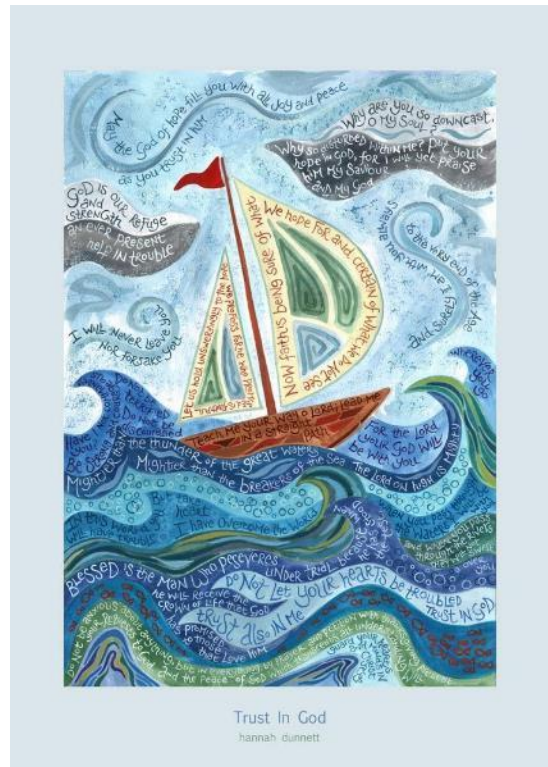
Christian artist Hannah Dunnett produces artwork intertwined with religious texts.

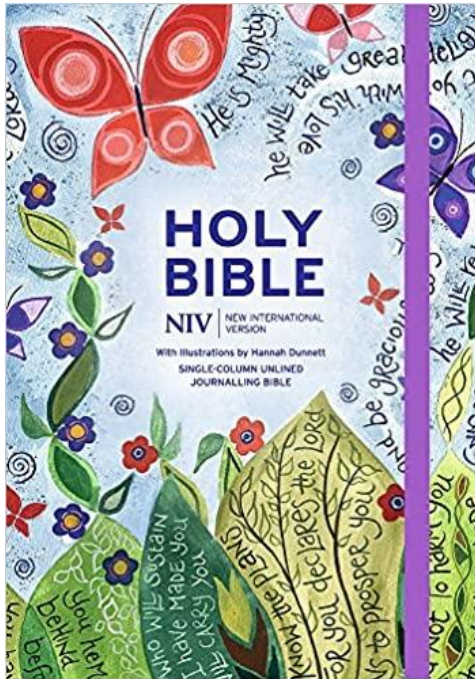
Her designs are reproduced on a range of items from greetings cards to calendars, mugs and bookmarks. Each drawing is inspired by the scriptures and prayer.

She is said to have an ability to visualise the symbolism of scripture in a way that makes it tangible and accessible; inscribing God's word onto landscapes, seascapes and everyday environments with her brushstrokes and creating deeply meditative images. Looking at her work, children get the chance to soak up scripture through her pictures. Hannah originally studied medicine and worked as a family doctor before becoming a full-time artist in 2011.

After hearing about the Ten Ten project, Hannah and her husband Ben (a Christian composer and musician) contacted the Diocesan Education Team and have been working on supporting schools to promote positive mental health through art.

Hannah has recorded a short film for our schools in which she discusses the feelings that she has when she designs and paints. This will be sent out to schools.





Hannah has also produced a Journaling Bible which encourages adults or children to reflect and journal creatively in God's presence. The single-column setting and blank margins allow for plenty of room beside the Scriptures for notes, drawings, stencilling or prayers.

Also included are shortcuts to key stories, events and people of the Bible, lists of references for help and guidance and a reading plan to help you familiarise yourself with the Bible.

The book won Bible of the Year at the Christian Resources Together awards 2018.

Royalties from all sales of the NIV Bible help Biblica in their work of translating and distributing Bibles around the world.

Symbols of Balance – Building with Willow

Biblical tradition

The Willow is a tree referenced many times in Christian tradition. The Bible tells us that God commanded the Hebrews to take branches of the 'handsomest trees, particularly of the willows of the brook' and to hold them in their hands before the Lord, as a token of rejoicing, at the feast of Tabernacles

One of the greatest traits of the willow is its flexibility. It is one of the few trees capable of bending into outrageous poses without snapping – a powerful metaphor for people needing healing, recovery or a spiritual path. The message of the willow is to adjust to life rather than



fighting it. Its strength comes from its adaptability. It is a tree able not only to survive, but to thrive in challenging conditions.

Willow spaces serve as excellent prayer or reflection areas and can provide safe havens for children to talk about their feelings or have some time alone.

The collaborative nature of the building of the space builds self-esteem and confidence and the domes themselves provide space for quiet contemplation and peace.

Willow 'cocoon' can also be used inside quiet places inside school (and can be purchased readymade fairly cheaply). Domes can be used as stimulus and prayer or Bible story stations.

Building willow structures

Long unrooted willow cuttings (whips) can be used to make functional and attractive structures/barriers that grow and develop throughout the years as well as the seasons. Willow structures can be used for tunnels, domes (which can be interconnected with tunnels if you have the space) and as prayer or reflection areas. You do not need to be especially creative and even the simplest structure can look very impressive, and there are no rigid rules to follow - just handy guidelines. Schools can either work out their own design and order the number and size of whips needed or kits can be ordered online. Ask the local photography club to chart the progress of your structure in pictures for a display in the school/church.

Willow roots easily when you plant freshly cut willow (long whips *or* short cuttings) in the ground in Winter. If you order willow whips online you will receive a bundle of sticks, but push them in the ground and you can create attractive, environmentally friendly, practical structures to form dens, tunnels, shaded seating areas and much more !

Making a Twigloo – a prayer or spirituality space

You will need

1. Living Willow Whips – the *Salix Viminalis* variety - 6', 7', 8' or 9' lengths is best
2. Strong garden string
3. Spade or garden fork
4. Weed matting (optional)
5. Play Bark (optional)

Find a suitable spot for your willow den and mark the footprint using a spade, some string or sand.

If weeds are a concern, weed matting is a good idea. Play bark can then be added for a more natural feel. Secure the weed matting into the ground.

Now you're ready for your willow. *Salix Viminalis* or other *Viminalis* species are generally recommended as they are quick growing, hardy and ideal for living willow dens.

Start by finding 6 of the sturdiest willow whips to make your entrance, bringing them together to form an arch. Tie these securely together using the garden string.



The main structure can now be built. Begin with several of the thicker stems and plant these vertically at about 30-40cm intervals around the willow den base. Tie opposite whips together where they meet to begin to form a dome shape. Then begin planting and weaving in the diagonal willow whips. The top of your willow den can be left open to grow before then weaving together.

Stems should be planted about 10cm into the ground. Cut a small cross into the matting (if used) and push the stem into the ground if the soil is soft.

Smaller stems can be planted diagonally, working around the willow den base. These stems will produce more shoots and will make your den nice and bushy, whereas the vertical stems grow long and add to the height.

When your living willow den is complete you can add more structure by weaving in horizontal willow whips around the structure and from the top of the entrance arch to the rest of the structure. The floor of the den can be left as bare matting or play bark can be added.

A step by step guide to building willow tunnels

Step 1: Mark out 2 trenches, dig to a depth of 30cm and mix with compost. You may wish to make the tunnel curve or taper.

Step 2: Insert 2 poles opposite each other along the length of the trenches at a spacing of approximately 25cm. Shorter poles can be used towards the rear of the tunnel to enhance the tapering effect.

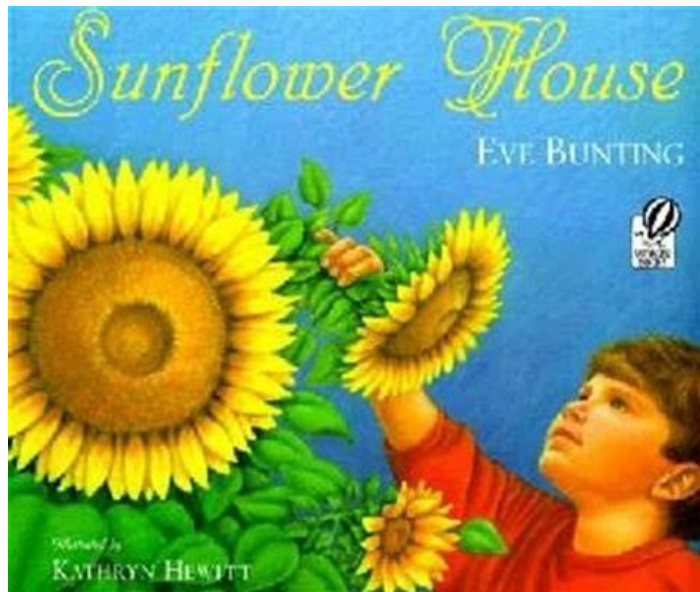
Step 3: Bend each pair of poles together to form an arch and tie at the end of each pole.

Step 4: To increase the stability of the structure you can secure a pole(s) along the length of the tunnel at the apex of curves.

Step 5: In order to build up the growth on the sides of the tunnel insert two woven poles at an angle of approximately 45 degrees at the base of each upright on each side. These are then woven back along the tunnel to finish near the top of the curve.

Sunflower Houses as Prayer Spaces

“Sunflower House” by Eve Bunting is a story about a boy who plants a circle of sunflower seeds into the ground. It tells the process of how he watches them while they grow and what happens when they are fully grown. The book is a nice starter for this project, to build a sunflower house in your school grounds.



The house, which will need to be built as early as possible in the Spring in order for it to grow in time for the children to use it later in the summer term, can be a focal point for prayer and provide shelter for children wanting to talk over issues with their friends or staff.

An added element to this project is that the seeds from your first sunflower house will be able to be replanted for the following year's house. This enables children to contribute to the ongoing prayer of children in years to come.

Building a sunflower house

The seeds of the giant varieties, when planted in a square or circle, create the perfect setting for a prayer or gathering space.

You will need:

- One packet of sunflower seeds - choose a tall variety like Mammoth or California Greystripe
 - Stakes
 - String or twine
 - A hoe
 - Compost
1. In early spring, find a suitable location with good soil, flat ground, and at least six to eight hours of direct sunlight during the growing season.
 2. Decide whether the sunflower house is going to be a square or a circle.

3. Stake off the agreed design in the chosen location. Tie a string to one of the stakes and stretch it around the perimeter to designate the walls of the house – remember to leave an opening for the doorway, approximately two-feet wide.
4. Remove any rocks, grass, and weeds from inside the perimeter. To make the ‘floor’ of your house weed-free, place flattened layers of cardboard inside the marked area, then cover the cardboard with straw or mulch. If you want to, later you can plant a cover crop inside the house to form a comfortable ‘carpet’! Using the string around the perimeter as your guide, use a hoe to clear the perimeter area.
5. Use a trowel to dig a small hole, 2cm deep, every 30 cm along your marked outline. Place two seeds in each hole, following the packet instructions. Cover the seeds with loose soil. Water seeds thoroughly and daily.



Once your sunflowers are in full bloom, you’ll have around 20 days to enjoy the beauty of the house. The blooming phase provides the opportunity for bees to pollinate the flower and fertilize the seeds. When the back of the sunflower head turns yellow, you’ll know the seeds are ripening.

To harvest the seeds of your sunflower, wait until your sunflower droops and turns brown. Then, cut the stem leaving four inches from the head of the sunflower. You must store the sunflower head upside down in a dry and breathable bag. Your seeds should be ready to harvest within 110 to 125 days after you planted the flower and can be stored ready for planting the following year.

The Power of Drumming

Research by the Royal College of Music found that drumming has a positive impact on mental health, with a 10-week course of group drumming reducing depression by as much as 38% and anxiety by 20%.

Making music can be a powerful tool for promoting mental health and wellbeing and the shared experience of drumming in a group facilitates feelings of belonging, acceptance, safety and care.

Drumming accelerates physical healing and has even been found to boost the immune system. In addition specific studies conducted by professionals in the fields of music therapy and mental health show us that drumming:

- Reduces tension, anxiety and stress
- Helps control chronic pain
- Boosts the immune system

- Releases negative feelings and emotional trauma.
- Induces deep relaxation and lowers blood pressure
- Research also suggests that drumming serves as a distraction from pain and grief.

Drum Circles also provide an opportunity for adults and children to feel connected with others and gain a sense of interpersonal support. There are great benefits to feeling connected to others, especially those in similar situations. A drum circle can also provide children with an opportunity to connect with their own spirit at a deeper level.

Pictured right are children attending a diocesan leavers service at Winchester Cathedral which included a drumming workshop.



Founded in 1996 by drummer Terl Bryant, the Psalm Drummers' vision is to stir up prayer, praise and worship and lead people to Christ through drumming.

Follow the link below to watch the Psalm Drummers praising God at the Albert Hall.

<https://youtu.be/0cXtx7q1C-s>

The group calls on drummers everywhere to drum out beats that carry the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. Psalm Drummers encourage a life lived in time with the heartbeat of God and in the worship of Jesus Christ.

Psalm drummer, Reverend Mike Griffiths from Winchester, has worked with diocesan headteachers, promoting good mental health through drumming. He recommends using packs of flat drums, the details of which are below:

<https://www.inspire-works.co.uk/remo-sound-shapes/>

e: info@inspire-works.co.uk t: +44 (0)7798 603180



Also, Amazon has a bongo Cajon for around £20. See the link below.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Meinl-MYO-BCAJ-Bongo-Cajon-Construction/dp/B009VDW4OM>

Tight budgets may make buying a set of drums impossible. If schools buy drumsticks, children can use the backs of chairs or tables to beat out the rhythm effectively.

Start drumming by asking the children to copy and respond, start by drumming simple patterns, building up simple rhythms and getting children to play a rhythm securely before breaking them into parts. This builds confidence and teamwork. Try asking children to drum to words eg. Cup of tea, have you got any cake? etc.

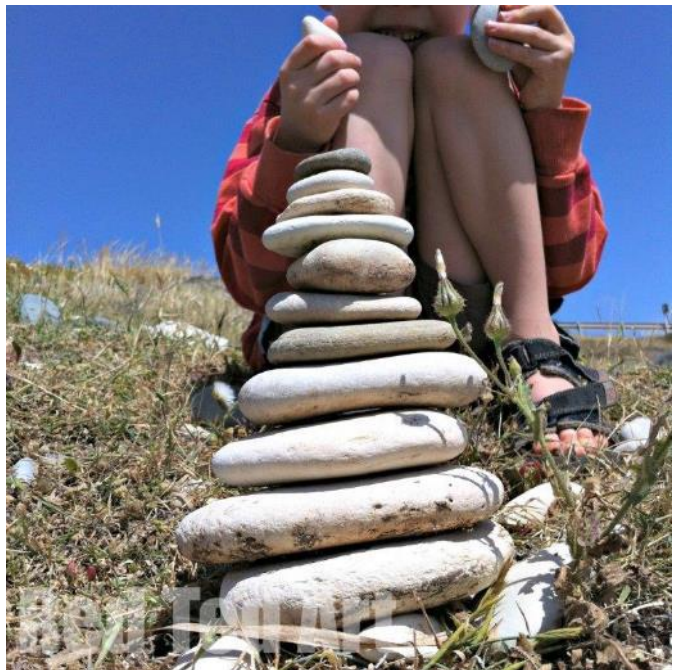
Children can then start to drum their favourite line of a Bible verse or psalm. Encourage children to talk about their choice and what it means to them. When all the children drum their line at once, you have started to drum a psalm. The joy of this activity is that children cannot get it wrong.

Marking the Way with a Cairn

A **cairn** is a man-made pile (or stack) of stones, often used as a waymarker. The disciple Peter wrote that we are like living stones being built together. (1 Peter 2:5) Just as stones start off with rough edges which are eroded away as they are jostled by other stones, so our rough edges are made smooth by the experiences life throws at us. Similarly, cairns can be a visual prompt to travellers, showing them a safe way to go.

Cairn building can be a chance to teachers to talk to children about these concepts. Children might like to write their hopes and fears for the future onto pebbles using marker pens and symbolically 'hand them over' as they build them into a cairn.

Cairns are used as trail markers in many parts of the world, in uplands, on moorland, on mountaintops, near waterways and on sea cliffs, as well as in barren deserts and tundras. They vary in size from small stone markers to entire artificial hills, and in complexity from loose conical rock piles to delicately balanced sculptures and elaborate feats of engineering. Cairns may be painted or otherwise decorated. You school cairn could highlight you school values or demonstrate teamwork and friendship. It can be a positive metaphor for building together, reliance on each other and interdependency.



This activity lends itself to prayerful reflection. It is a project that shows children that being prayerful does not always have to involve sitting still and having your

eyes closed. See more about the biblical significance of stones in the RE scheme at the end of this booklet.

Building a cairn can have lots of wonderful benefits for children– working as a team, finding appropriately shaped stones, deciding which to place at the bottom and how to build them up. Cairn building can work with very young children as the activity involves sorting skills and construction skills. Finally there are of course the balancing skills!

Cairn building will need to be carried out carefully to comply with Covid guidelines.

Feel Good Dancing

The highly-praised Springs Dance Company has developed some back to school wellbeing workshops, as a boost for children’s mental health through physical, feel good dance.

Framed in a reassuring and structured environment the workshops give children the chance to dance together, to observe and respond, and to re-establish relationships and community through working alongside each other. Space and social distancing won’t stop creativity flourishing in these inclusive, expert-led dance workshops.

The company is also offering a Christmas workshop which will guide pupils on a journey of dance, drama and discussion inspired by Anne Booth’s Christmas story Refuge.

Through learning, creating and performing movement, children will explore themes of welcome and showing kindness. Children can make connections between Mary, Joseph and Jesus’ first journey together and the many journeys of refugees taking place across our world today. Delving into characters and events, pupils can investigate the implications the story could have in their own lives and the wider world.

For more information or to book call: 07876 752 910 or email: touring@springsdancecompany.org.uk

Please do not forget to share with us any of the above projects that your school enjoys. Your work and pictures can then be published in our newsletters. Please email anything that your school wants to share to sue.bowen@portsmouth.anglican.org

Please make sure that you have parental agreement to share pictures of any children before you send.



Trees in the Bible



The bible opens and closes with trees (they are mentioned on the first page of the Old Testament and the last page of the New Testament) and – apart from people – there are more references to trees than to any other living thing. The trees in the garden of Eden were ‘pleasing to the eye and good for food’ (Genesis 2:9) and the first command given to Adam is to tend the trees and the rest of the garden. They are a source of beauty and also provide shade, shelter and building materials. Their fruit and seeds can be used for food, medicines, and cosmetics.

The prophet Ezekiel has a vision of the future, with a river flowing out of the Temple with trees growing on the banks:

“Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.” (Ezekiel 47:12)

This theme is picked up again in the book of Revelation, where the vision of the new heaven and earth includes “the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God ... down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” (Revelation 22:1-2)

The tree of life is an important theme in the bible, it is often seen as the reward for those who stay true to God’s teachings, for example Revelation 2:7 holds out a promise to Christians who are being persecuted, that those who stay true will be rewarded with the right to eat from the tree of life. The idea is found in many other religions and mythologies, where it is often understood as a cosmic tree, connecting all life forms, but the biblical idea is more that it is a source of nourishment and mental or physical wellbeing. The wooden handles of the Torah scrolls are known as *etz hayim*, or tree of life and Proverbs 3:18 tells us that wisdom, or the bible, “is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed.”

It is probably no coincidence that Jesus was brought up as a carpenter, so would have been used to handling wood of all kinds, and that after the resurrection, Mary mistake him for a gardener.

Psalms 1 describes the benefits of being like a tree planted by the waters with deep roots that draw up nourishment and keep it strong and stable.

**[They are] like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers. (Psalm 1:3)**

Other verses also use the metaphor of having deep roots, such as Ephesians 3:17 which encourages us to be rooted and grounded in love. If the roots, the hidden part of the tree,

are what gives it its strength, perhaps the suggestion is that it's the inner, unseen parts of our lives that make us strong and resilient.

Another biblical theme is the idea of bearing good fruit. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus encourages us to be fruitful, saying that whatever is in our hearts will be seen in our lives.

“Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. (Matthew 7:17-20)

Jesus teaches about the vine in John 15, which needs to be pruned to make it fruitful. “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”



Useful contacts / further information

Books for Children:

The Promise, Nicola Davies

The Tin Forest, Helen Ward

Green Poems for a Blue Planet, Martin Kiszko

Finding Wild, Megan Wagner Lloyd

Get Your Boots On, Alex White

'The Day the Crayons Quit' -

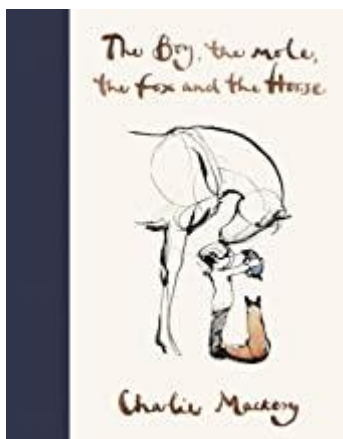
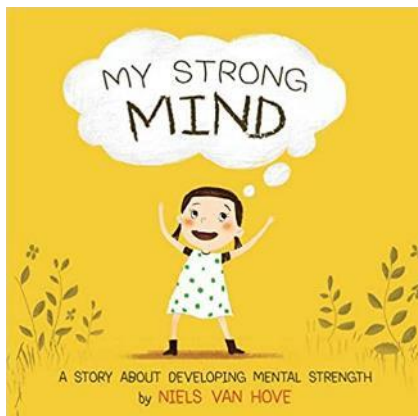
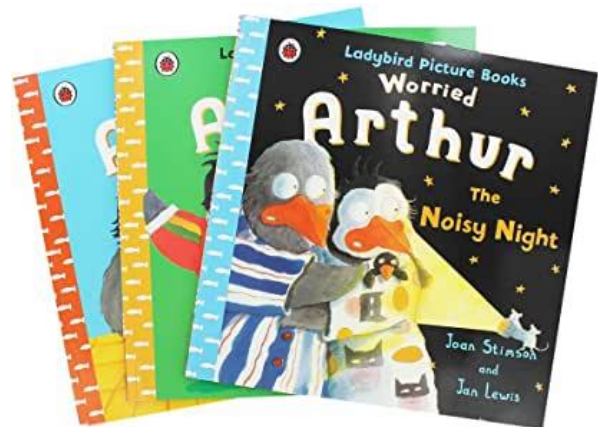
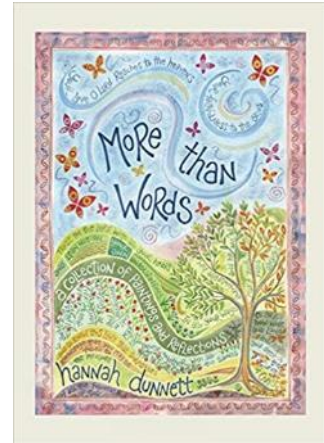
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=share&v=489micE6eHU&app=desktop>

'The Dot' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Clpw7PG7m1Q>

'Be Kind' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6NUJ2Jz50>

The Worried Arthur Series

You've Got This – A mental health journal promoting positive thoughts, Steve Turner



I Am Stronger Than Anger, Elizabeth Cole

Ruby's Worry, Tom Percival

My Body Sends A Signal, Natalia McGuire

The Survivor Tree, Cheryl Somers Aubin

The Tell-Me Tree, Karen Inglis

The Tale of The Three Trees, Angela Elwell Hunt

The Proud Tree, Luane Roche



Books for Adults:

Wild Worship, Wild Lent and Wild Advent – 3 books by Rachel Summers

Soulful Nature, Brian Draper and Howard Green

Spiritual Intelligence, Brian Draper

Earthed in God : Four movements of spiritual growth, Christopher Chapman

Nature Spirituality – praying with wind, water, earth, fire, Mark G. Boyer

Saying Yes to Life, Ruth Valerio

Forest Church, Bruce Stanley

Think Like A Tree, Sarah Spencer

Stilling, Michael Beesley

Planetwise, Dave Bookless – book and resource pack

Sacred Space Sacred Place, Barnabas

Teaching Children the Magic of Silence and Stillness, Maggie Dent

Creating a Multi-sensory Spiritual Garden in your school, Shahne Vickery

Outdoor Worship: Engaging with God in his Creation, Sara and Sam Hargreaves

The Nature Fix: Why Nature makes us Happier, Healthier and more Creative, Florence Williams

The Man Who Planted Trees, Jean Giono

Websites:

<https://thirdspacelearning.com/blog/13-outdoor-maths-activities-early-years-year-6-plus-bonus-ages/>

<https://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/articles/maths-in-the-great-outdoors>

<https://www.planetdolan.com/15-beautiful-examples-of-mathematics-in-nature/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/>

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/services-for-schools/mental-health-resources-for-schools/>

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/get-involved/get-involved-schools/school-resources>

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/stories-and-features/primary-school-pupils-given-targeted-mental-health>

http://thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/creative_prayer_idea_wild_worship_field_guide.pdf

<https://engageworship.org/ideas/outdoor-worship-garden-prayer-stations>

<https://arocha.org.uk/wildchristian/>

<https://thriveglobal.com/stories/19-must-read-books-to-help-kids-understand-their-emotional-and-mental-health/>

<https://childmind.org/article/best-childrens-books-about-mental-health/>

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/booklists/m/mental-health-awareness/>

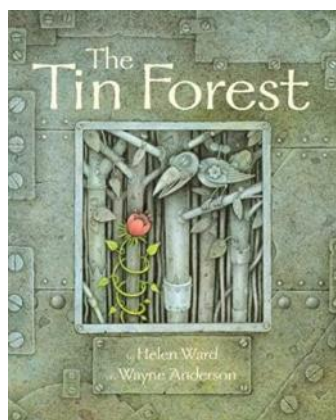
Ten Ten # Flourishing 2020-21 RE Unit of Work

This is an optional scheme of work for Year 6, that links to this year's Diocesan project and the 2021 leavers' services. There are far more ideas here than you will be able to use, but hopefully some of them will generate productive work with your class, or inspire you to develop your own resources.

Communicate and Apply What do we mean by Flourishing?

Choose a song or video clip or picture book as a stimulus to open the discussion.

E.g. Play 'SOS from the Kids' or watch 'Book of Butterflies' by Michael Leunig, or read 'The Promise' by Nicola Davies or 'The Tin Forest' by Helen Ward



You could use this as the basis for a **P4C enquiry**:

- In pairs, ask them to suggest the concepts (the big ideas) in the song or story, E.g. Hope, healing, compassion, new beginnings...
- Can they generate questions based on these concepts? (Do you always need hope to change the world? Can you heal the world without compassion?)
- Ask the class to vote on the question they think would lead to the best discussion. It's a good idea to talk with them about open-ended questions, but try not to influence their choice of question, tempting as it may be!
- Rather than putting their hands up, suggest that the children put their hand in their lap with their palm open if they want to contribute. Try not to join in yourself or comment on their ideas, unless you need to steer the discussion in a new direction.

- It's good practice to debrief after the discussion; did they choose the best question? Did everyone have their say or did anyone dominate? What could we learn for next time?

If you're unfamiliar with Philosophy for Children, have a look on the [SAPERRE website](#) for ideas and resources.

*There is an example of a resource at the end of this document, based on *The Book of Butterflies*, which can support children in thinking about open and closed questions.*

You can set up a shorter, simpler enquiry using Pose, Pause, Pounce, Bounce.

1. Pose



2. Pause



Pose a question, such as What is the symbolism of the seeds in 'The Promise'?

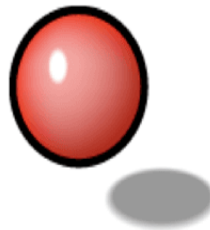
Pause for a minute to give thinking time.

Pounce on a suitable pupil to answer the question.

3. Pounce



4. Bounce



They bounce it on to another pupil. It helps to use a set phrase, such as 'I wonder what Alfie thinks?'



Alternatively, Use the **Planet Earth visualisation** activity at the end of this resource to help children think through ideas about the fragility of the planet and our responsibility to take care of it.

Taking the discussion further: Do we all understand Flourishing in the same way? Can we think of further examples from our own lives / books / films of people caring for each other and the world and of hope for the future? What would the world be like if people didn't care? Can you think of situations where it having hope would be a challenge?

Enquire Can we define what we mean by Flourishing? Do we have any further questions about this concept? How might a religious person understand the concept of Flourishing?

This would be a good opportunity to introduce the children to Jesus' promise in **John 10:10** 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' (NIV) Other versions talk of 'a rich and satisfying life' or 'abundant life.' [The Bible Gateway](#) is a useful resource for comparing different versions of the bible. What do children think fulness of life means? What would a rich and satisfying life look like?



A classic passage for thinking about the value of life is **Psalm 8** in the Hebrew Bible, which speaks of God's glory and the wonders of creation and the dignity of humans and their role in caring for the Earth. It would originally have been set to music and you can find instrumental versions of the psalm online, for example there's a [meditative version here](#), a [traditional choir](#), and an [animation of the first verse](#).

Perhaps the class could use instruments to create their own version of the psalm; what would they use for majesty? Glory? Moon and stars? Animals and birds?

OR could they find pictures to illustrate each verse and create a PowerPoint? Maybe they could put the psalm into their own words? [The Message](#) gives a modern paraphrase as an example, or there is a paraphrase of Psalm 8 by L Brandt at the end of this resource.



There are more ideas for using Psalm 8 with your class in Understanding Christianity, UKS2 Creation, Digging Deeper.

What connections can the class make between this psalm and the Creation story in Genesis 1 & 2? For example, Adam and Eve are made in God's image, they are given the task of naming the animals and told that they are stewards of the Earth.

This may not be the place to discuss whether the Genesis story is 'true'! Maybe just remind them that Christians interpret it in many different ways; some believe it is literally true, while others see it more as a poem or metaphor. The important point for most Christians is that they believe the world was created by a loving God, rather than the mechanics of how it came into being.

Starry night King David may have written Psalm 8. As the youngest of eight brothers, he may well have felt insignificant as a child; there is a story in the Bible of him being left at home to tend the sheep while his older brothers go off to war. You can imagine him looking up at the night sky and feeling very small, but then realising that God values each of us and has a purpose for our lives (verses 3 – 8). Many artists have painted the night sky; famously Vincent Van Gogh, but also Arthur Poulin, a Californian monk, who often paints the Big Sur skies above his monastery. He always starts with layers of black background and tiny dots and describes the process as a journey, never knowing how the picture will develop.

He says that all life begins with one dot and that his brushstrokes are like mustard seeds waiting to explode. What do the class think he means by this? Jesus described God's Kingdom as being like a mustard seed, (Matthew 13: 31-32) what do they think he meant? Poulin says that each dot is full of potential and symbolises hope. Perhaps the children could create their own images in this style and add their reflections about the enormity of the universe and their ideas about human value and dignity.



Midnight (Christmas), Arthur Poulin

Contextualise You could take the concept of flourishing in many different directions.

There are three suggestions in this resource:

- Researching Christian organisations that are trying to be good stewards of the planet or to give hope in situations that seem challenging;
- Exploring the symbol of the Tree of Life;
- Investigating cairns.

You might choose a different idea from the project booklet, or your class might have their own suggestions.

Here are some suggestions for groups to investigate; they don't have to be Christian, but it would be a good idea for the children to find out what motivates or inspires their chosen organisation. For example, Oxfam is not overtly Christian, but is motivated by the belief that 'all human lives are of equal value and full of potential.'

How do these initiatives help people to flourish?

They might like to choose how they present their findings: a booklet, a PowerPoint, a song or rap, a television news report? Encourage them to use their initiative and to take ownership of their work!

	<p>Wild Christian is a campaign run by A Rocha. One of their projects is the #Thirty Days Wild challenge, an app that suggests different wild activities for a month.</p>
<p>The Living Lightly Campaign is another A Rocha initiative, which sets challenges such as organising a family Christmas that doesn't damage the environment, or making small changes to make their homes more eco-friendly.</p>	
	<p>Climate Sunday is a campaign to encourage churches to take climate change more seriously and take action to reduce their carbon footprints.</p>
<p>TEAR Fund is a charity that runs projects around the world to end poverty and help communities take control of their lives. As part of this they encourage people to adopt a greener lifestyle. They have set up a Reboot campaign to create a fairer future for everyone.</p>	
	<p>Christian Aid are doing lots of work on climate change and sustainability, to help end global poverty and injustice.</p>

Ruth Valerio is a Christian environmental campaigner, who is encouraging people to live more sustainably after lockdown. Her campaigns include 'Beauty with a Conscience,' which includes reducing the use of plastic, palm oil and harmful chemicals.



Hampshire & Isle of Wight
Wildlife Trust

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust work to protect local wildlife and encourage people to connect with nature by organising a range of events, such as family pond dips and wildlife experiences.

Alternatively you could explore the theme of **The Tree of Life** in the bible, which ties in closely with this year's project. Perhaps you could start by asking the class for as many uses for trees as they can think of: shade, shelter, food, medicine, cosmetics, building materials....

There is a **mystery strategy** at the end of this resource where children can work in small groups to investigate why the Tree of Life is an important symbol for Christians. You can either cut up small cards for groups to sort in any way that helps them answer the question, or place large cards round the room for them to find the information they need. Another approach would be to give each child a card and ask them to stand on a continuum line to show how relevant or irrelevant they think their information is.

Many artists have painted the Tree of life, such as Gustav Klimt; there are many examples on Pinterest and elsewhere on the Internet. Perhaps the children could paint their own version and write about what their picture represents. The Spirited Arts competition has some good sentence starters to help children talk about their work, such as 'When people look at my artwork, I want them to notice....' Or 'When I painted this, I was thinking about...' This year's themes include 'God's Good Earth?' 'Healing' and 'Inspiring.' You can find out more on the [NATRE website](#).





The Internet also has ideas for group projects such as the Tree of Life Gratitude Project, where children write things they are grateful for on leaves which they stick to a tree of life outline. Alternatively, there are ideas for a tree of strength, that helps children identify their personal strengths and coping skills. Another possibility is making individual trees showing their roots and hopes and dreams and creating a 'Forest of Life,' with the idea that we are stronger together.

There is a Mexican tradition of making clay trees of life; they are often used to teach the bible story, from the Garden of Eden to Jesus' death and resurrection and the tree of life in Revelation. Perhaps each child could make a leaf or flower or bird or insect to add to a class 'tree'?

You might like to end with something practical, such as a tree census of your school grounds or local area, or tree planting. This could be done locally or through a charity that plants trees in deforested areas of the world, such as the [A Rocha Tropical Forests Programme](#).

Your class could also research Wangari Maathai, the 'tree mother' of Africa, who was responsible for millions of trees being planted in Kenya and was the first black woman to receive a Nobel prize.

Another idea would be to explore the **Jewish Tu b'Shevat festival**, or 'New Year for Trees.' This is celebrated in January or February, usually when the almond trees are beginning to bloom in Israel. Jewish people will eat fruit associated with Israel, especially those mentioned in the bible, such as olives, grapes, figs and pomegranates. They often plant the seeds and it has become an important environmental awareness day, where synagogues and other Jewish groups plant trees. You can find out more information on the [Chabad website](#) or [My Jewish Learning](#). One tradition is to eat a fruit or nut that is tough on the outside and sweet inside, like an almond; one that is sweet and soft outside but has a hard centre like a peach and one that is soft all through, like a fig. Jews will talk about what kind of people these represent.



Cairns



You could start this session with a mini cairn building competition, perhaps using smarties or glass beads or small pebbles. Which group can build the tallest cairn?

Who has seen a cairn in real life?
Has anyone helped build one?

There are some amazing photos of stone art you could show to catch their attention, for example by Jon Foreman, Michael Grab or Andy Goldsworthy. Hopefully the class will be inspired to have a go themselves!

The word 'cairn' comes from the Gaelic for 'heap of stones.' Israel is a country that is full of stones and they were often built into piles as a reminder of significant events or agreements between people. An example of this is in Joshua 3-4, when the Israelites cross the River Jordan to enter the promised land after 40 years in the wilderness and are told to take 12 large stones from the centre of the river and use them to build a cairn to remind them how God had rescued them from slavery and given them a new home. There is a video of this story on the [Saddleback website here](#) (You know your class and can decide if you think this would be helpful or not. There are other videos online, but they tend to assume that their audience is Christian, which would be inappropriate in an RE lesson, unless you discuss this with your class first.)

What would be the milestones in your pupils' lives? How could they mark these events so they remember them in the future? You could use this as part of your transition activities, perhaps linking it to making memory boxes or time capsules.

Many traditions have used stone piles to mark significant places or events in their traditions; these are some of the ways that Christians have used cairns or stones to help them pray or reflect:

- Rachel Summers in 'Wild Worship' has some interesting reflective ideas linked to stones, mountains and cairns. She suggests everyone carrying a pebble or small stone up to the top of your nearest hill and placing them together to form a cairn or waymarker at the top. As the stones are made warm by our body heat, they can symbolise us being built together as a community.
- One of Jesus' disciples, Peter, wrote that we are like living stones being built together. (1 Peter 2:5) Just as stones start off with rough edges which are eroded away as they are jostled by other stones, so our rough edges are made smooth by the experiences life throws at us. They might like to write their hopes and fears for

the future onto pebbles using marker pens and symbolically 'hand them over' as they build them into a cairn.

- David chose five smooth, round stones to fight against Goliath. What are the 'giants' that your children feel they are battling? What are the tools or weapons they could use against them? Maybe courage, resilience, hope, family and friends etc. They could write their secret weapons on stones which they place somewhere significant. Or perhaps they could write them on pieces of paper, which they scrunch up to make 'stones' and throw at a 'Goliath' outline – if you make a few suggestions the class will probably devise something much more creative, which is meaningful to them!
- [Barnabas in schools](#) has some ideas for reflective activities with stones and if you are thinking about developing a reflective garden or outdoor prayer space at school you might consider asking everyone to decorate a stone which could be incorporated into the design.



Evaluate

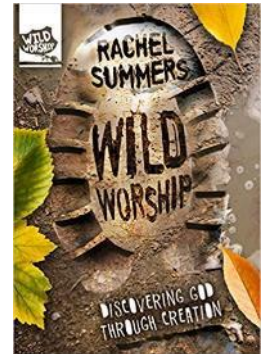
What would Christians take away from this? What have I learned about Flourishing? Have my ideas changed at all? What (if anything) might I do differently now?



It would be good if the class could respond to their learning with practical, creative activities that allow them to engage with the natural world. This might involve designing an outdoor reflective area or prayer space. There are lots of ideas on the [Prayer spaces in schools website](#) linked to Forest Schools, such as making wooden discs to express their hopes for the world, or using hammocks as a stilling activity, or creating an outdoor Lord's Prayer labyrinth.



Alternatively, perhaps they could plan an outdoor collective worship, either for their class or for younger children in the school. This might be linked to World Environment Day on June 5th, or World Oceans Day on 8th June. There are lots of good ideas for this in 'Wild Worship' by Rachel Summers.



If you have looked at the Tree of Life, where the leaves bring healing to the nations, they could write prayers for troubled areas of the world on leaves and tie them to a tree, or tie on ribbons to represent their hopes for the future. If you explored cairns, then they could write their dreams and aspirations onto stones and build them into a cairn.

If you didn't use the Earth visualisation at the communicate and apply stage, this might be a good opportunity to use it and for the children to suggest a project or campaign they could take part in as a result.

This last part of the cycle is an opportunity for the class to look back over their learning and to reflect on whether they or their thinking have changed at all. What might they do differently as a result of thinking about Flourishing?

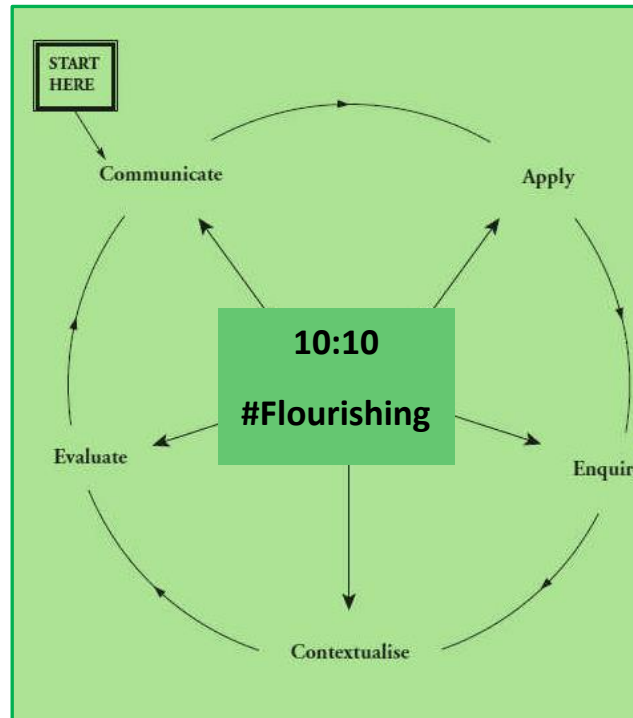
Communicate and Apply

What do we mean by **flourishing**? Use a song or film clip stimulus to discuss the concept. Do we all understand **flourishing** in the same way? What would our lives be like if we failed to flourish? What would the world look like if we didn't help others to flourish? When might it be a challenge?

Evaluate

Why are these issues important for Christians? Are they important to me? Has my thinking changed at all?

Choose a practical activity where children have the opportunity to connect with the environment and reflect on their learning.



Enquire

What does **flourishing** mean to us? What might it mean in a religious context? Unpack Jesus' teaching about fullness of life, or explore Psalm 8 to discuss ideas of the beauty of the natural world and our responsibility to take good care of it. How does this link to the idea that every human has dignity and value?

Contextualise

You could explore how Christians (and others) have tried to care for the natural world and those living in poverty. How are the two connected? How do they contribute to human flourishing? The children could work in groups to research a particular organisation and find a creative way to present their findings to the rest of the class.

Alternatively, you might like to explore trees or cairns or another idea from the project booklet and investigate the symbolism for Christians and others and how they can help people to flourish.

Earth Visualisation



Stilling:

Unless your class are already used to this kind of exercise, it can be useful to use the stilling activity at the beginning of this script to help them be in the right frame of mind for the visualisation exercise that follows.

Afterwards give them time to process their thoughts and feelings; some children might like to draw or write down what they have experienced, others may prefer to sit quietly. Invite those who would like to, to share their ideas, but don't force anyone to do so.

Let's have time to relax and let our minds and bodies be quiet just for a little while...

Sit comfortably, back straight, yet relaxed.

Fold your hands one on top of the other gently and let them rest in your lap. Close your eyes when you're ready. Begin by taking a few deep breaths.

As you breathe in, imagine breathing in happiness and calm feelings and as you breathe out, imagine letting go of any busy thoughts...

Now think about your body. Does it feel full of energy, or a bit tired? Start to relax the different parts of your body by letting them become loose and heavy, asking the chair below you to support the weight of your body as you take a moments relaxation. Let your feet rest gently against the floor. Let your tummy relax, and your shoulders, and all the way down your arms and into your hands... Allow the muscles in your face and cheeks to relax...

Think about your breathing becoming nice and slow.... long and deep and quiet....

We are going on a journey to see our planet Earth...

As you breathe slowly, imagine yourself slowly floating upwards...

You move magically through the air, like a feather being blown upwards on a gentle breeze... You are rising over our town... Can you see the buildings, the roads, the parks? Can you see our school and your home? What are the colours of the streets and roads? Look at the patterns they make...

As you move higher, you can see that our country is an island... a green island set in a dark grey sea...

Now you are moving even higher... As you float in the sky you are passing over all the lands and oceans of the world... You see herds of animals roaming over vast green plains... You see tall mountains white with snow... You see dark green forests and golden brown deserts... You see tall buildings in cities sparkling in the sunlight... You see the grey, green, blue waters of the many oceans and little boats moving slowly on the surface...

You rise higher still... Now you are floating alone above the Earth... It is like looking down at a great blue and green marble...

Can you see the swirling clouds as they dance across the surface? Can you hear the noises of the world? What can you hear? Remember the sounds for when you return...

Imagine that you could pick up and hold the planet Earth in your hands... What would it feel like? How would you take care of it? Hold in your memory what the earth in your hands felt like...

Long pause.

Now we will come back to our classroom... We move downwards through the gentle clouds... We pass through places where it is dark night and all the world below is asleep... We move on towards the morning...

Can you see the animals and people below you starting to wake up? Now we are coming closer to our own school... Look down at the familiar streets and playground... What colours can you see? ...

Soon you will be back in this room. When we return remember what you felt as you floated above the Earth... Remember what you felt as you held the round world in your hands...

Slowly bring yourself back to this room... Notice your quiet still breathing... Slowly open your eyes.

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Psalm 8: a paraphrase by Leslie Brandt

O God, how full of wonder and splendor You are!

I see the reflections of Your beauty
and hear the sounds of Your majesty
wherever I turn.

Even the babbling of babes
and the laughter of young children
spell out Your name in indefinable syllables.

When I gaze into the star-studded skies
and attempt to comprehend the vast distances,

I contemplate in utter amazement
my Creator's concern for me.

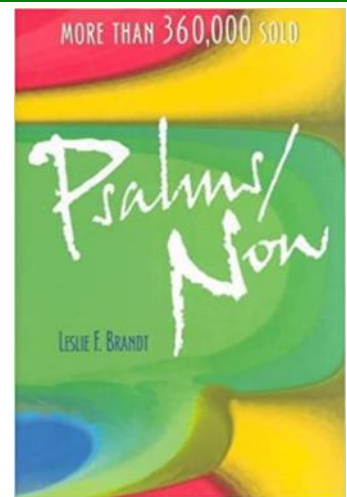
I am dumbfounded that You
should care personally about me.

And yet You have made me in Your image.

You have called me Your child
and chosen me to be Your servant.

You have assigned to me
the fantastic responsibility of carrying on your creative activity.

O God, how full of wonder and splendor You are!



L.O. Ask Different kinds of Questions

Name _____

'Look and see' questions (In the film)
*E.g. What colour was the first butterfly that came out of the book?
What did the man do when he first came into the room?*

'What if?' questions (Use your imagination)
*What if it was a book about dragons?
What if a different person had opened the book?*



'Ask an expert' questions
*E.g. What nationality is Robert Leunig?
Has he made any other films?*

Philosophical questions
*E.g. What do the butterflies represent?
Can beauty change the world?*

Mystery Strategy

Why is the tree of life an important symbol for Christians?

Use these cards to work out your response. There is no one right answer, so sort out the cards that you think are most important and arrange them in a way that makes sense to you and your group.



Trees appear on the first page and the last page of the bible.	The first instructions given to Adam were to take care of the trees in the garden.	Proverbs 3:18 tells us that 'Wisdom is a tree of life.' The bible links wisdom to learning from nature and listening to God.
Without trees and plants, there would be no life on Earth.	In the Genesis story, human life starts in a garden full of trees.	The book of Revelation at the end of the bible paints a picture of a garden city, which includes the Tree of Life.
The trees in the Garden of Eden were beautiful to look at, good to eat and included the Tree of Life. (Genesis 2:8-9)	The Tree of Life in Revelation has leaves which heal the nations.	The Tree of Life is found in myths and legends from many different religions around the world.
We depend on trees for clean air and water, food and medicine, shade and shelter.	The cross where Jesus died is often referred to as a tree.	The bible teaches that life is full of choices and that we should choose life!
We can choose whether we see nature as a gift to be enjoyed and protected, or something to exploit and consume.	Trees are a symbol of hope. Small seeds grow into trees that support life and provide habitats for many creatures.	The bible talks about the 'fruit of the spirit,' love, joy, peace etc which we should try to cultivate in our lives.
Jesus grew up as a carpenter and would have known a lot about trees and wood.	The bible mentions trees more than any other living thing apart from people.	Jesus said that our lives should bear good fruit, and that you could tell a good person by the kind of life they live.

<p>The bible promises the Tree of Life as a reward for those who stay true to God when they are attacked for their beliefs. (Revelation 2:7)</p>	<p>Many religions believe in a cosmic Tree of Life, that connects all forms of life together.</p>	<p>In the bible the Tree of Life is a symbol of mental and spiritual health and wellbeing.</p>
<p>Psalm 1 encourages us to be like a tree with deep roots that keep us steady and draw up water and nourishment.</p>	<p>Trees are resilient. If they are harmed, they are able to heal themselves and keep growing.</p>	<p>Every tree supports a whole ecosystem of life.</p>

Ten Ten #Flourishing

2020-21 RE Unit of Work:

Key Stage 1



This is an optional scheme of work for Year 2, that links to this year's Diocesan project and the 2021 leavers' services. There are more ideas here than you will be able to use, but hopefully some of them will generate productive work with your class, or inspire you to develop your own resources.

Communicate and Apply

What do we mean by **Flourishing**?

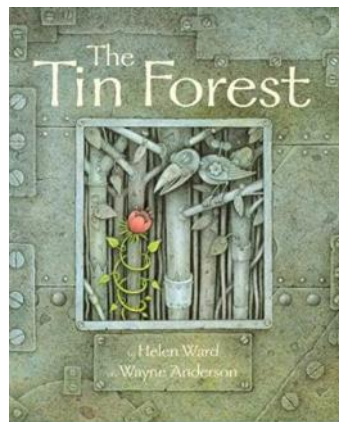
Plant seeds with your class; sunflowers, nasturtiums or beans are all easy for children to handle. Discuss what conditions seeds need to help them grow and flourish (Water, sunshine, warmth, good soil etc) Alternatively you could show them two plants, one that has been well looked after and one that has been neglected. What could we do to the dying plant to help it thrive?

What do the children think that people need to help them flourish? You may like to draw round a member of the class and ask the children to fill the outline with words and pictures that show what helps them thrive, such as good food, shelter, love, kindness, laughter etc. Make sure they include both physical and spiritual / emotional needs.

This might be a good opportunity to show the [Ikea video](#) where one plant has kind words spoken over it and flourishes and another is bullied and shrivels up. At the end, one of the girls says, 'If it can affect a plant, it can definitely affect other people.' What do the children think? Does the way we speak to one another have a lasting effect on them?



You could also choose a picture book as a stimulus to open the discussion, such as [‘The Promise’](#) by Nicola Davies, [‘The Tin Forest’](#) by Helen Ward, or [‘A Child’s Garden’](#) by Michael Foreman.









You could pause the book at a critical moment and use Conscience Alley to explore some of the themes. Put the children in two lines facing each other and choose one child to consider a dilemma. E.g. for *The Promise*, should the girl keep her promise and plant the acorns? Should the old man in *The Tin Forest* hold onto his dreams of living in a forest? Should the boy give up when the soldiers destroy his garden? As the child walks between the lines, the others give advice: ‘You should keep trying, don’t give up.’ ‘It’s not worth it, nothing’s going to change.’ Once they’ve listened to all the advice, they make their mind up and say what they’ve planned to do.

Alternatively you might choose to hotseat the central character, to find out what motivates or inspires them.



There are a number of active ways that the children could respond to the ideas in these books. Ask a few children to share their ideas, encouraging them to give reasons for their answers. It's good to give the others an opportunity to change their minds once they've heard what others think. You could start with questions or statements specifically related to the story, then move on to use some of these more general, philosophical statements:

- Being out in the natural world can help people to flourish.
- Small actions can change the world.
- People don't change. They're either kind or unkind.
- One person can't really make a difference, you need a team or people.
- People are happier if they live in beautiful surroundings.

<p>Use a skipping rope or similar to mark a dividing line. Ask the children to jump to one side or the other if they agree or disagree. Start with factual questions and get more abstract. Encourage them to give reasons for their choices.</p>	
<p>Mark out a continuum line with a skipping rope or masking tape. Label one end 'Agree' and the other 'Disagree.' Read out a series of statements and ask the children to stand on the line to show how far they agree or not.</p>	
<p>Label the Four corners of the room, 'Agree strongly', 'Agree a little', 'Disagree strongly' and 'Disagree a little.' Ask the children to go and stand in one of the corners, depending on whether they agree or not with a statement.</p>	
<p>Ask the children to form a Human bar chart to show whether or not they agree with one of the statements.</p>	
<p>For a Snowball discussion, ask the children to discuss a question in pairs, then when they have both shared their ideas, join with another pair to make a four, then an eight, then a whole class discussion. To make it more challenging, they have to agree before they can join up with another group.</p>	
<p>Philosophers' fruit salad: Put everyone in a circle with one child in the middle. Ask them to swap places if they agree with the statement and the child in the middle has to move into one of the empty spaces. <i>Set some ground rules first, so they don't bump into each other!</i></p>	

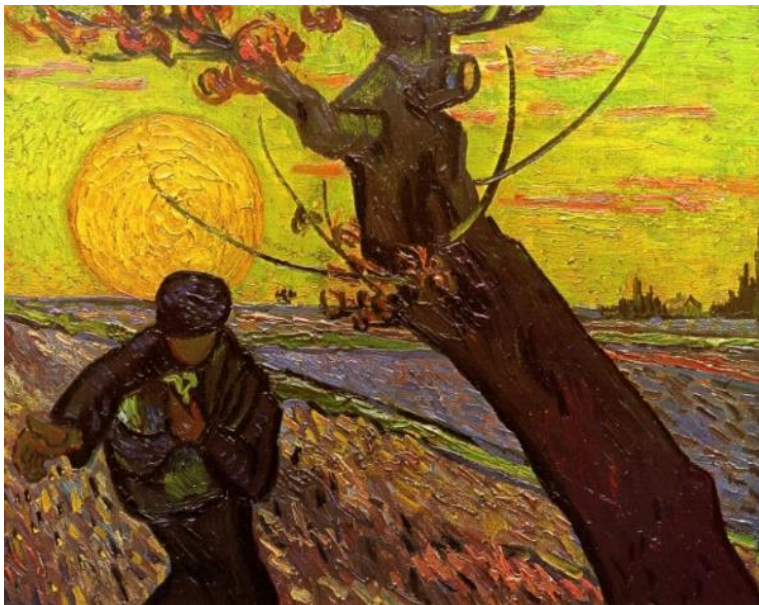
There are lots of ideas on the CLPE website if you wanted to do some extended work on [The Promise](#) or [The Tin Forest](#).

Enquire Can we define what we mean by **Flourishing**? Can people flourish as well as plants? In what way?

What does the Bible teach about the concept of **Flourishing**?

Jesus liked to use everyday objects and scenes in his teaching. Many of the people who listened to him grew their own food and so he talked about seeds to show them what sort of people they should be. In the **Parable of the Sower** he tells people that they are like different kinds of soil: some are hard and stony and nothing can grow there. Some are full of weeds and brambles which choke the seedlings, while others are like good soil and when they hear Jesus' teaching they listen attentively and their lives bear lots of fruit.

You could start by showing the class a picture of the sower and ask them what they think is happening. These examples are by Van Gogh, Bertram Poole and an African version from the Jesus Mafa website.





Ask the children to work in pairs and choose which picture they would like to work with. They could suggest five words that sum up the painting, or four questions they would like to ask about it. Can they think of a good title for it? After you have looked at the Bible story together, ask them for three connections between their painting and the text.

You can read the story for yourself in [Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23](#) (The Bible Gateway is a really useful website where you can find different translations of a passage.) For your class, it's worth using a good children's story Bible, such as the [Lion Storyteller Bible Book of Parables](#), or the Barnabas Children's Bible. There is an animated version of the parable [here](#) *You will need to watch it first and decide if it is appropriate for your class, as it's written for a church audience and might not be suitable in school. You might choose to stop after two minutes, before Jesus explains the meaning of the parable.*

Explain to the class that a parable is a story with a meaning. What do they think the meaning of Jesus' story is? If the seeds stand for Jesus' message, then what sort of people would be like the hard ground where the seeds can't take root? What sort of people would be like the ground that's full of weeds and brambles? What sort of people are like the good soil, where the seeds put down deep roots and flourish?

Ask them to mime the body language of a hard, stony person and a person with rich, well-watered soil? You could give them different scenarios and ask them to act out a positive and a negative reaction:

- Ruby is feeling sad because her hamster wasn't eating properly this morning.
- Harry is worried about the football match after school, the other team are really good and he's worried he'll let his side down.
- Lottie has just moved house and this is her first day at her new school.
- Tom is upset because he couldn't do the maths this morning and Jayden laughed at him.
- Ellie is excited because her Dad is taking her out for the day on Saturday.

Contextualise

There are lots of ways you could put the concept of **Flourishing** into context. There are ideas here for exploring the life of Wangari Maathai, learning about the Tree of Life or using the Understanding Christianity resource to learn about the environmental group A Rocha and the importance of taking time to rest. You know what will work best with your class, or you may have your own ideas for finding out how engaging with nature can give us physical and mental good health.



Wangari Maathai is a great example of a Christian who was inspired to care for the environment and also encouraged ordinary people, especially women and children, to flourish. She was called the ‘tree mother’ (Mama Miti) of Africa and was responsible for millions of trees being planted in Kenya. She was the first black woman to receive a Nobel prize. She was strongly influenced by her Christian faith and also by the Kenyan Kikuyu traditions that said that trees should be shown special respect. She believed that God wants us to take care of the world, not exploit it and campaigned to stop developers cutting down trees. There is a video of the book [A Tiny Seed](#) about her life. Alternatively, [Seeds of Change](#) is longer, but beautifully illustrated. Why do the children think that planting trees helped the people to flourish?

You might draw out that it protected their environment, but also empowered them – the women came to believe that they could make a difference in the world. She often quoted the Kenyan national motto ‘Harambee’ which means ‘let’s all pull together.’ Do the class think this is a good motto? Why? Why not?

She used to tell the story of a hummingbird, that tried to put out a forest fire by flying over it and dropping tiny drops of water from its beak. You can see a version of the story [here](#). What do the children think the message of the story is? What did Wangari Maathai mean when she said, ‘I will be a hummingbird’? If you use P4C in your school, this story would be a really good stimulus for an enquiry.



1. Pose



2. Pause



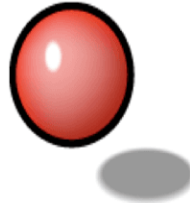
A simple way to set up a discussion is to use a strategy like Pose, Pause, Pounce, Bounce.

Pose a question, such as 'Can we make a difference in the world, or are we too small and insignificant?'

3. Pounce



4. Bounce



Pause for a minute to give thinking time.

Pounce on a suitable pupil to answer the question.

They bounce it on to another pupil. It helps to use a set phrase, such as 'I wonder what Alfie thinks?'

Try to encourage the children to link their ideas, for example. 'I agree with Scarlett because...'. Or 'I disagree with Sam because...'

There are more teaching ideas about Wangari Maathai [here](#). *Again, some are more suitable for a church setting than a classroom, so be selective!*

The children might be inspired by the story of nine year old Felix Finkbeiner. He learned about Wangari Maathai at school and decided that while adults were busy talking about the environment, children could get on with doing something practical. His vision was that children could plant a million trees in every country on Earth and so solve the problems of global warming. His initiative, 'Plant for the Planet' has become a worldwide movement and had been adopted by the United Nations. His slogan is, "Stop talking, start planting.'



You might like to end with something practical, such as a tree census of your school grounds or local area, or tree planting. This could be done locally or through a charity that plants trees in deforested areas of the world, such as the A Rocha [Tropical Forests Programme](#).

Another way to contextualise the concept of flourishing, is to explore the theme of **The Tree of Life** in the Bible, which ties in closely with this year's project. This is a theme in many religions and traditions, but the Jewish / Christian idea comes from the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden in the Creation story and the image at the end of the book of Revelation of a garden city with a Tree of Life at the centre. It symbolises physical and mental wholeness. There is more information in the Ten:Ten project booklet.

You might start by asking the class for as many uses for trees as they can think of: shade, shelter, food, medicine, cosmetics, building materials....



Many artists have painted the Tree of life, such as Gustav Klimt (above). There are many examples on Pinterest and elsewhere on the Internet. Your children might like to paint their own version and write about what their picture represents.

[The Spirited Arts competition](#) has some good sentence starters to help children talk about their work, such as 'When people look at my artwork, I want them to notice....' Or 'When I painted this, I was thinking about...'. The themes for 2021 include 'God's Good Earth?' 'Healing' and 'Inspiring.' You can find out more on the [NATRE website](#).



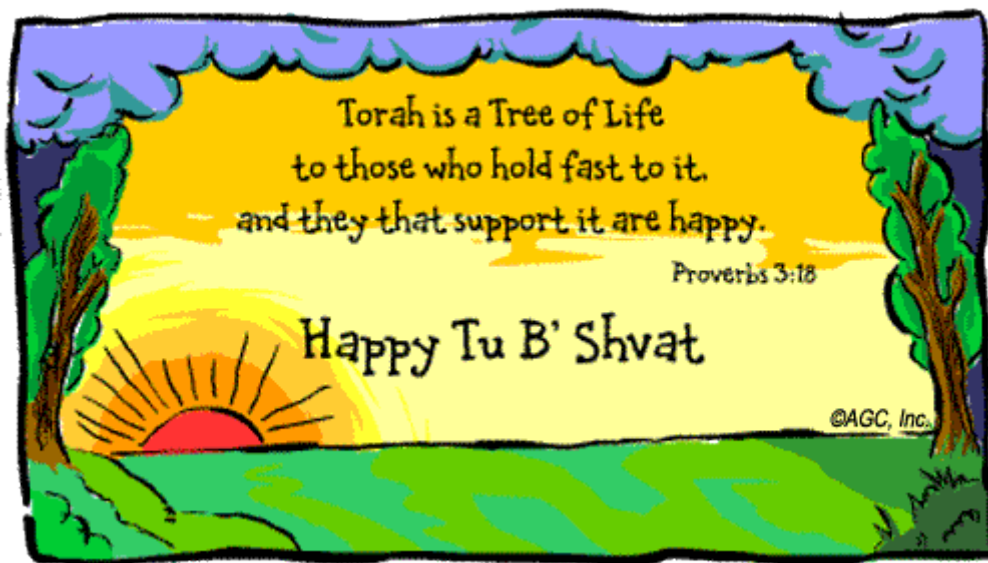


The Internet also has ideas for group projects such as the Tree of Life Gratitude Project, where children write things they are grateful for on leaves which they stick to a tree of life outline. Alternatively, there are ideas for a tree of strength, that helps children identify their personal strengths and coping skills. There are also suggestions for making individual trees showing their roots and hopes and dreams and creating a 'Forest of Life,' with the idea that we are stronger together.

There is a Mexican tradition of making clay trees of life; they are often used to teach the Bible story, from the Garden of Eden to Jesus' death and resurrection and the tree of life in Revelation. Perhaps each child could make a leaf or flower or bird or insect to add to a class 'tree'?



Another idea would be to explore the **Jewish Tu b'Shevat festival**, or 'New Year for Trees.' This is celebrated in January or February, usually when the almond trees are beginning to bloom in Israel. Jewish people will eat fruit associated with Israel, especially those mentioned in the Bible, such as olives, grapes, figs and pomegranates. They often plant the seeds and it has become an important environmental awareness day, where synagogues and other Jewish groups plant trees. You can find out more information on the [Chabad website](#) or [My Jewish Learning](#). One tradition is to eat a fruit or nut that is tough on the outside and sweet inside, like an almond; one that is sweet and soft outside but has a hard centre like a peach and one that is soft all through, like a fig. Jews will talk about what kind of people these represent.



OR: You could also use some of the Understanding Christianity Creation resources, although this unit is not so much about unpacking the Creation story, as exploring how engaging with the natural world can benefit our mental and physical wellbeing. The Digging Deeper section has good ideas for talking with your class about taking time to rest, just as God did on the seventh day of the Creation story. Why do the children think that having times of quiet might be good for helping them to flourish?

The resource also suggests finding out about [A Rocha](#), a Christian environmental group who have a project called [Wild Christian](#), with practical ideas for getting families outside and exploring nature. They also set up the [Living Lightly campaign](#) which encourages people to reduce their carbon footprints.

Evaluate

What would Christians take away from this? What have I learned about **Flourishing?** Have my ideas changed at all? What (if anything) might I do differently now?

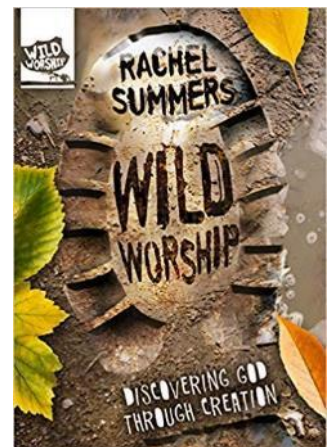


It would be good if the class could respond to their learning with practical, creative activities that allow them to engage with the natural world. This might involve designing an outdoor reflective area or prayer space. There are lots of ideas on the [Prayer spaces in schools website](#) linked to Forest Schools, such as making wooden discs to express their hopes for the world, or using hammocks as a stilling activity, or creating an outdoor Lord's Prayer labyrinth.



Alternatively, perhaps they could plan an outdoor collective worship, either for their class or for younger children in the school. This might be linked to World Environment Day on June 5th, or World Oceans Day on 8th June. There are lots of good ideas for this in 'Wild Worship' by Rachel Summers.

If you have looked at the Tree of Life, where the leaves bring healing to the nations, they could write prayers for troubled areas of the world on leaf outlines and tie them to a tree, or tie on ribbons to represent their hopes for the future.



This last part of the cycle is an opportunity for the class to look back over their learning and to reflect on whether they or their thinking have changed at all. What might they do differently as a result of thinking about **Flourishing?**

Communicate and Apply

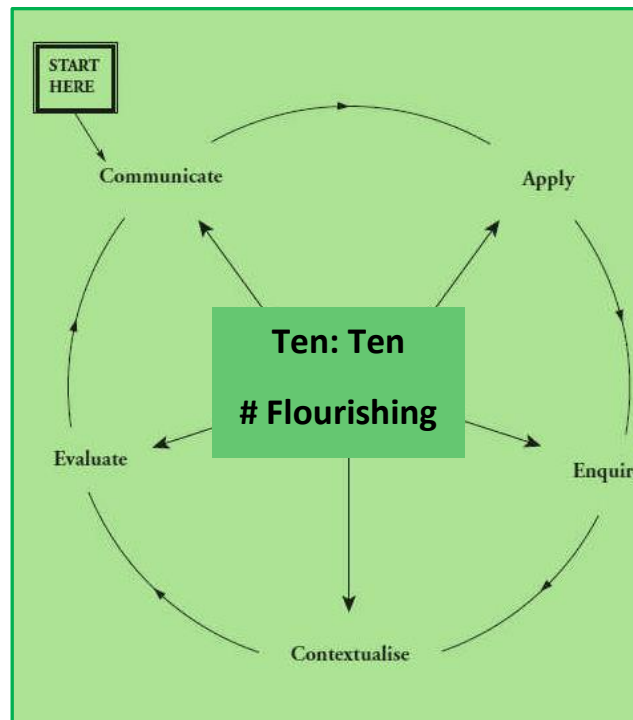
What do we mean by **Flourishing**? Discuss planting seeds and what makes them flourish. What about people? Use a story such as The Promise, The Tin Forest or A Child's Garden to explore the idea.

Do we all understand **Flourishing** in the same way? What would the world look like if people didn't help each other to flourish?

Evaluate

Why is **flourishing** an important concept for Christians? Is it important for me? Has my thinking changed at all?

Choose a practical activity where children have the opportunity to connect with the environment and reflect on how they can flourish.



Enquire

What does **Flourishing** mean to us? What might it mean in a religious context? Explore the Parable of the Sower to discuss what stony ground and good soil might look like? How can we make sure we have rich, well-watered soil? How can we help other people to do this?

Contextualise

What inspired a Christian like Wangari Maathai to campaign against deforestation and plant trees all over Kenya? How did her actions encourage other people to flourish? **Or** investigate the Christian environmental group A Rocha. How do their actions allow the planet and individuals to flourish? How are the two connected?

What does the Tree of Life teach us about human flourishing?