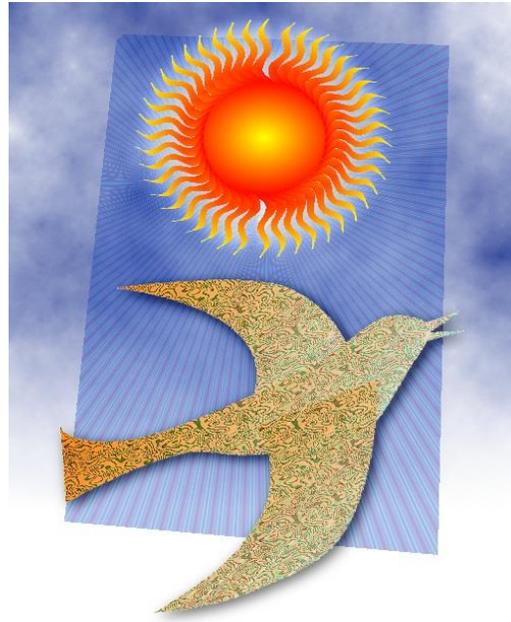




Working On Worship (4)



The Round of the Seasons

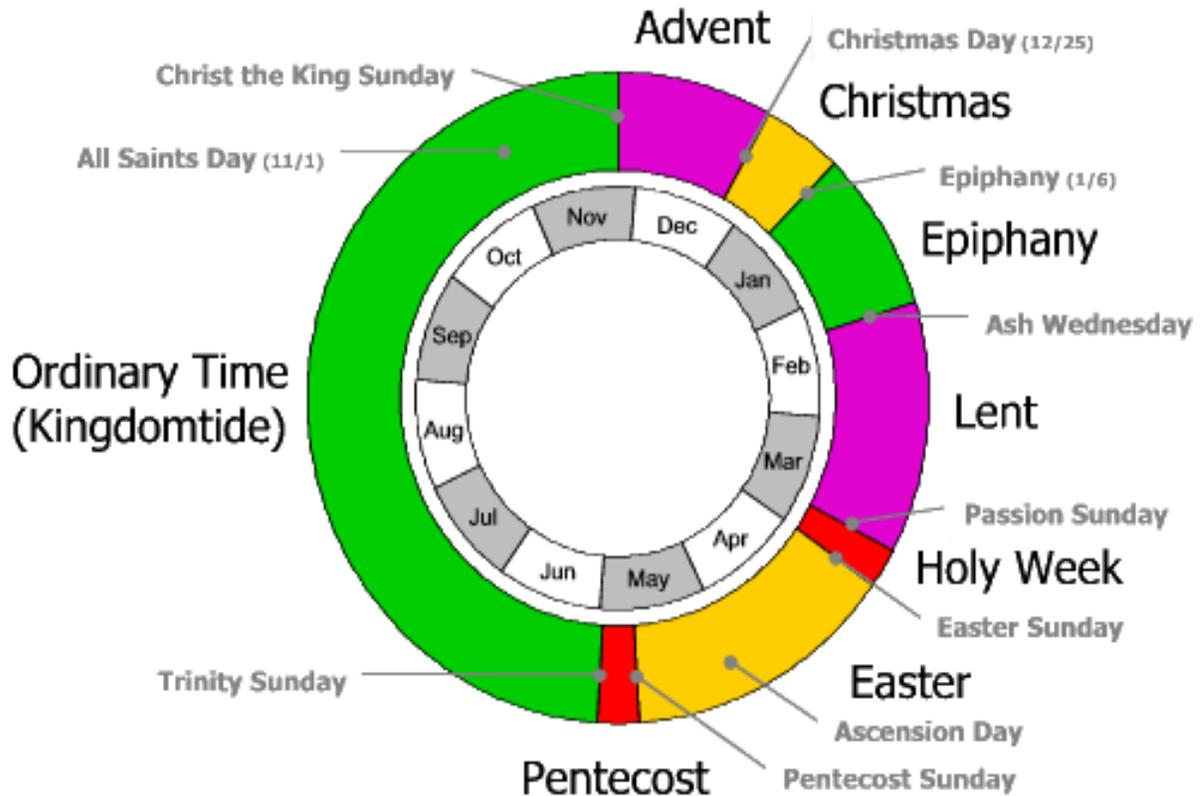
We are a seasonal people, used to summer, autumn, winter and spring, used to looking forward with anticipation to certain things and with dread to others. We grow up in a society influenced by annual events which dictate when we have breaks or celebrations, what we wear or what we eat:

- Historical commemorations – Remembrance Day, Guy Fawkes
- National 'days' or events e.g. Bank holidays, Wimbledon, Red Nose day
- Christian and other religious festivals e.g. Christmas, Diwali

The rhythms of school life also have a major affect on society as a whole and individual school communities may develop their own unique round of traditions and customs associated with such things as:

- a new school year – moving classes or starting school
- Christmas, Easter, half-terms, summer and bank holidays
- Exams, SATS, parents' meetings, reports
- Summer fetes, concerts, trips and outings
- Leavers' services, discos and parties

Collective Worship in school may reflect any of these annual events. Church schools should not simply mark but be **enriched** by the preparation for, and celebration of, the two great Christian seasons. Saints' days and lesser festivals should also appear, and festivals of other traditions or cultures marked appropriately. *A diagram below shows the Church Year as celebrated largely in the Western church.* If some school families belong to Eastern churches there will be differences to include e.g. a different date for Easter, a special celebration of the Feast of the Transfiguration or of Jesus' baptism.



Cheveley C of E Primary created a permanent display of the church's year in their entrance hall. Swathes of shiny material in liturgical colours fan out from a circular wooden clock around which pupils move a pointer as they follow the church's year during Collective Worship.



Marking changes in the Christian year

Many Christian celebrations call to mind the events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection and with these the beliefs which Christians hold about God. Church schools should actively help children look forward to these events during Collective Worship e.g. by finding ways to use Advent and Lent as periods of anticipation. It is also good to remember that Christmas and Easter are not just one-day wonders e.g. Christmas-tide extends right through to Epiphany (twelfth-night). With careful thought the celebrations can be extended even though school terms in Britain are determined by Christian festivals and celebrations may fall in holiday periods.

Some schools mark the seasonal changes by using:

- different colours ... on a movable worship board, behind their song words, on their worship table cloth or even on a spotlight on a worship display

- hanging banners made by children, parents or church members with seasonal pictures / symbols – from wall bars or poles in the worship venue
- a display of festival facts, or pictures of pupils celebrating last year, outside the worship space as a way of anticipating a festival this year

Making more of seasons and festivals in Collective Worship

Seasons are a time for teaching the faith:

- Tell the seasonal stories and do it well: drama, poetry, song, video
- Read the Bible – use some actual passages Christians will use in church.
- Stress what Christians believe e.g. Christmas is about 'God with us'.
- Use newsletters etc to inform parents about a festival and its meaning e.g. asking clergy to write a brief paragraph or provide 5 facts!

Seasons are a time for special worship:

- Make use of seasonal songs and prayers – some traditional, some new
- Go to church for worship and invite guests
- Involve children / school council in planning worship – let them talk to clergy / research to find out what different Christians do
- Prepare a Eucharist for a saint's day, Ascension or Whitsun

Seasons are a time for symbols and traditions:

- Use traditional seasonal symbols and explore their meaning.
- Re-introduce traditional customs which involve the children.
- Design your own symbols, banners and decorations.
- Develop your own traditions as well as drawing on church ones.... ones which link church, school & community will be best (see below for ideas)

Seasons are a time for splashing out:

- Light extra candles in worship, maybe coloured candles.
- Link celebrations with special food or a party.
- Put up decorations or a themed display in the worship space.
- Hold a whole school festival day and celebrate in worship at the end of the day.

If we make celebrations memorable for everyone the anticipation for the next time will be that much greater...

Barnabas in Schools has special celebratory assemblies for festivals.
<https://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/>

Roots and Fruits 1 / 2 also provide festival 'services' or assemblies.
(<https://www.imaginor.co.uk/>)

Creating your own Christian worship traditions

Some schools are providing new traditions for children to celebrate Christian seasons each year, establishing new and fun ways to involve the community.

- **Nativity 'crawl'** – a whole village was involved, with houses as bulging inns, shepherds in fields, a census point and singing for the baby in an allotment shed! Roman soldiers acted as marshals and villagers joined the throng as the pupils passed by!
- **Kings' Day** (Epiphany) – children dressed as kings to follow stars and panto camels round a school field, accompanied by local bishops and then held a special service, linked through skype with a country which celebrates this festival nationally, and took advantage of photo opps with the camels
- **Ascension Day** – reviving an ancient village tradition, children and parents walked behind their school cross over fields to a neighbouring church for a picnic and special service
- **St George's Day** – a papier mache dragon was hunted down in the woods by children with St George's flags and the princess (a dad!) was rescued and brought home for a party; the same dragon came to the church service later.
- **Passion Play** – a staging of the stories of Easter around the school field with parents moving around behind the pupils as they acted out each story, sang a song and read a prayer and reflection
- **Giant Crib exhibition** – schools created life-size models of nativity figures for a county-wide exhibition and presented assemblies on each figure
- **Christmas, Harvest, Easter and Pentecost Experience** – scenes and reflective stories set up in a local church or school hall give time for reflection and worship. <https://www.gloucester.anglican.org/schools/jumping-fish-publications/experience-journeys/>
- **Pentecost Party** – kite-flying and picnics with worship out in the open air

Putting some faith into secular / school seasons

Schools and churches might think about how they create opportunities to celebrate things which are important to their children and families each year. And how can they be marked with special prayers or times of worship e.g.

- Leavers' celebrations, new Reception children or new teachers arriving – developing special traditions for this
- SATS ... governors or other classes write prayers for children doing tests
- Birthdays – adding a second verse to 'Happy Birthday' God bless you always (x 2), God bless you and keep you, God bless you always'

<p>The Incarnation Cycle God, in Jesus, shares our life ...</p> <p>During this time, Christians celebrate:</p> <p>Advent</p> <p>Christmas</p> <p>Epiphany</p> <p>Candlemas</p>	<p>Celebrations might include:</p> <p>Advent – <i>posada, advent calendars, advent candles and rings</i></p> <p>Try Jesse Trees (with symbols from Old Testament stories leading up to the birth of Jesus Christ)</p> <p>Christmas – <i>nativity cribs, carol singing, nativity plays</i></p> <p>Try 'Experience Christmas' / Stations of the Nativity / Christmas Mystery Plays / Giant crib figures</p> <p>Epiphany – <i>European customs e.g. la galette in France, Star boys in Germany</i></p> <p>Try putting on a 'Kings Day' complete with home-made crowns and camels with Collective Worship as the culmination.</p> <p>Candlemas – <i>celebration of the presentation of Christ in the temple and telling the story of Simeon and Anna</i></p> <p>You could celebrate Christingle now as Candlemas is about presenting baby Jesus to God so goes well with Children's Society who provide good materials.</p>
<p>The Paschal or Easter Cycle and changes or transforms it.</p> <p>During this time, Christians celebrate</p> <p>Lent</p> <p>Passiontide</p> <p>Easter</p> <p>Ascension</p>	<p>Lent – <i>Shrove Tuesday pancakes, Ash Wednesday</i></p> <p>Try 'Love Life, Live Lent' (http://www.livelent.net) as a series of Collective worship themes.</p> <p>Passiontide – <i>reflecting on the stories of Holy Week</i></p> <p>Try 'Experience Easter' (Gloucester Diocese) or a giant Palm Sunday parade to the local church including donkey.</p> <p>Easter – <i>celebration of Christ's resurrection</i></p> <p>Put on mystery plays in Collective Worship telling stories of Jesus' resurrection appearances. Learn Easter songs and perform publicly.</p> <p>Ascension– <i>usually celebrated with a mid-week Eucharist</i></p> <p>Use as an opportunity to trial a whole-school Eucharist</p>

