



## 7. Back to School!

*You've been invited to a Secondary School for an Assembly! Now what do you do? This Resource sheet should help you in planning for an assembly!*

### Be Prepared!

There are several things to find out before you plan your assembly or visit the school.

- What age group you will be leading an assembly for and how many pupils there will be
- How long do you have? Remember not to over run!
- What's the usual format of the assembly? Do you need to keep to it or can you do something slightly different?
- Are there any musicians? Will there be a hymn sung? Will you be expected to choose the hymn?
- Does the school have any equipment available you may need, such as CD player, projector, flipchart or screen? Or do you need to bring it yourself?
- If you're using electrical equipment, do you need an extension cable? Sometimes it's easier and more reliable to take your own.
- Do you need help to operate the equipment during your assembly?

- Is there a theme that the school is working with and do you need to fit into it? Has anyone been chosen to read a bible passage?
- What's the name of the teacher in charge of the assembly that morning? You may wish to refer to them or thank them at the beginning or end of the assembly.
- Are you going to be introduced? How do you want to be introduced? Do you want to use Reverend, Father, Mr, Mrs, Christian name or surname?
- Do you wish to involve the young people in the assembly – is that possible? How much notice do the teachers and students need?
- Arrive in plenty of time – especially if you have things to set up!

### Starting Points

Here are some hints and tips to consider when planning and delivering your assembly.

#### Ideas

There are lots of School Assembly books and resources from which you can get ideas. Either use them as they are or to stimulate your own creativity.

#### The point is...!

Decide on a theme or Bible passage. Make just one point – don't try to do too much or over complicate. Less is more!

#### Have a laugh!

Use humour – God enjoys a laugh! So do we! You are allowed to enjoy worship. Remember, humour can be a good way of getting serious points across. Sometimes, following a joke or

humorous moment with a serious, moving point can be quite effective.

### **Be yourself!**

This is extremely important. You don't have to try and pass yourself off as something you're not! Young people are very astute – and know when you're not being sincere.

### **Watch your language!**

Don't be judgemental. Sometimes an 'off the cuff' remark can affect a young person. So watch your language and be careful what you say! Be sensitive, and remember that some of the pupils may be dealing with an issue you are talking about.

### **Stimulate**

Use lots of different stimulus like music, poetry, literature, drama and art. Is it possible to have music playing as people assemble?

### **Be Topical**

Use extracts from a newspaper or T.V. Refer to the radio news that morning. Listen to Radio 1 in the car on your way to school! Refer to song lyrics and topical issues.

### **Speak the language!**

The assembly should be relevant to the pupils. Use things that are important to them. Use stories about celebrities or TV programmes, such as the Soaps, things that the young people can associate with.

Avoid using over 'churchy' language – people may not know what you're talking about! For example, the word 'Sacrament' may mean a lot to you but does it communicate anything to the young people? Can you use words like 'redeemed' or

'Incarnation' without explaining what they mean? Remember that not all the young people in the assembly will be Christian. Some will have no church contact at all, others will confess to being atheist, whilst others may be Muslim or Sikh.

### **Do something!**

Don't just *talk* for ten minutes – do something! You have to be quite gifted or have something important to say to just talk – ten minutes can be a long time if you have little to say or just keep repeating yourself! Light a candle, show a picture, use slides or *Powerpoint* presentations, play recorded music, and use other props and visual aids.

### **Variety is the spice of life!**

Don't stick to the same format for every assembly – change the order in which you do things. You can plan quiet contemplative assemblies, but there is also a time to be noisy and out going. Try not to get them too hyped up though - the staff may not be happy with inheriting a hyped up group of young people before their classes begin!

### **Pray**

Use different ways of praying, from 'thank you' prayer to prayer for others and ourselves. Use extempore prayers, or prayers written by pupils or get ideas from books. You can use formal prayers but sometimes quite 'chatty' prayers to God using everyday language can be quite effective.

### **Speak the Word!**

You can either read directly from the bible, or a modern or dramatic version of it. Refer to what Jesus said or did; use extracts only rather than whole passages. Use drama and give the pupils different parts to read to help make the passage come to life!

### **Be Quiet!**

Give pupils time to reflect – don't be afraid of silence.

### **Count us In!**

Allow pupils to participate – let them read bible passages, find prayers, or write their own prayers. If you are doing this, you will need to provide the material before the day. Teachers have the opportunity of working with the young people beforehand to deliver their own assembly or to ask them what they want and what topics they'd like to deal with. Another way of involving the young people is to 'select' volunteers to help you with particular activities.

### **Challenge**

People need to be challenged – they need to think and learn. Let there be substance to what you say or do!

### **Have a heart!**

It is important to remember that it's not a show – sometimes there are occasions when an assembly has been so visual and entertaining that it has little or no religious content or spiritual side. There has to be a heart to your assembly!

### **Be prepared!**

Arrive on time and make sure everything is ready before the young people arrive. If necessary, prepare notes and bullet points on a postcard.

### **Don't worry!**

Some people feel intimidated by young people - especially when faced with a hall full of teenagers! But remember: they're only human! Above all: enjoy it! You are in a very privileged position – so make the most of it!

### **Thank you!**

Thank the young people at the end of the assembly – for listening, being involved, being attentive.

### **The Law**

The law regarding the requirement to take part in a daily act of collective worship is found in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 Part II, Chapter VI, sections 70 and 71. Sub-section 1 of section 70 of the act requires that each pupil in attendance shall on each day take part in an act of worship. Most schools do not abide by this regulation.

The worship programme should be worship that is 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' - Education Act 1996 Part V, Chapter 3, section 386 (2).

Remember it's difficult for teachers who are not themselves Christian to present Christian worship and ideas. This is where you can play your part!

The experience of many priests is that it's easy to get your foot in the door of Primary Schools and more difficult to make any inroads with Secondary Schools. There may be some truth to this. However, many people also shy away from Secondary Schools because they feel intimidated by the age group of the young people! When faced with a few hundred bored looking teenagers this is understandable. But young people are receptive! Oh yes, and human too!

### **Making contact!**

You could make contact with the Headteacher or the Head of the RE Department. Make an appointment with them and introduce yourself!

If you have the chance to present an Assembly they may not invite you back again! This doesn't necessarily mean that they didn't like you or how you delivered your last assembly. It could be that in their own busyness they just haven't got around to following it up. So why not give them a call!

## Other Things to Consider

### Using Other's Gifts!

If you really think that Secondary School Ministry isn't for you then why not see if there is someone in your parish who can do it better! Go into school together.

### Work together

Most Secondary Schools will have a catchment area larger than your parish. So why not liaise with your neighbours? They could have a real gift for this kind of ministry. Or just take it in turns to go into the school every week or month.

### More than just an Assembly!

There is more to ministering to Secondary Schools than just delivering the occasional assembly. You can be a useful resource to the RE Department by helping out with Class Work, using the church building as a Resource, or in one to one counselling.

Can your parish provide a professional resource to the school by making the most of the building? Are there other members of the parish who can be part of a Resource Group? For instance, helping out when schools visit and being around to welcome the class and answer any questions. Maybe there is a retired school teacher in your parish who would love to be involved in this kind of work!

## Resources

The National Society

Church House

Great Smith Street

London

SW1P 3NZ

Tel: 020 7898 1518

Fax: 020 7898 1493

Email: [info@natsoc.c-of-e.org](mailto:info@natsoc.c-of-e.org)

Registered charity number: 313070

## Books

**Off the Shelf Assemblies: 101 Acts of worship for secondary Schools** by W.E. Beals (Kevin Mayhew, 2002 £19.99). **AZ of assemblies: 26 ready to use assemblies for 9 -13 year olds** by Caroline Vallance (Kevin Mayhew, 2001 £8.99). **The Complete Assembly Resource Book** by Mike Anderson, Martin Grace and Paul Heesome (Kevin Mayhew 2001) (£22.99). Some of the books by David Gatward such as **Can We Talk, Lord?** (Kevin Mayhew 1998) also provide an interesting way to pray with young people.

## Web Sites

The National Society stands out for a Christian voice in Christian education. At [www.natsoc.org.uk](http://www.natsoc.org.uk) you'll find lots of resources for School Assemblies, and Class work, etc. You may also find [www.churchschools.co.uk](http://www.churchschools.co.uk) useful and [www.damaris.org/relessononline](http://www.damaris.org/relessononline) - a subscription site though there are a few freebies! [www.assemblies.org.uk](http://www.assemblies.org.uk) is the schools resource site from SPCK. [www.scriptureunion.org.uk](http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk) offers various Bible resources for all ages. An initiative encouraging people to pray for schools can be found at [www.schoolsprayernetwork.org.uk](http://www.schoolsprayernetwork.org.uk)

E-mail: [youth@llandaff.org.uk](mailto:youth@llandaff.org.uk)