



11. Power Point to Prayer

A worksheet to help you use Microsoft PowerPoint in prayer and worship with children and young people particularly in a School setting

Prayer and Worship

Prayer and worship are at the heart of the Christian life. Yet so many people find them difficult. Perhaps this has something to do with people's perception of prayer and worship!

Often, for those who work with children, prayer is associated with 'eyes closed and hands together'. Yet, prayer and worship is so much more than saying words and keeping still!

Worship involves the whole of who we are. Yes, prayer can be meditative, quiet and still but it can and should involve the whole of our being. It can involve movement or stillness, imagination or visual aids, touch, smell, and sound.

Schools have a legal obligation to provide daily Christian worship, and Church schools should be in a position to use the resources available to them to offer prayer and worship that is real and engaging.

There are lots of resources available to us to help children and young people to pray and worship. One of

these resources which is increasingly used is modern technology.

Using modern technology allows us to be creative and help children and young people to express, communicate and relate to God and each other in a way that relates to the way they live and experience the world.

Modern technology is the use of the creativity and skill of human beings who, we believe, have been gifted by God. So, modern technology in itself is worship in the 'broad' sense of the word because we are using our God given gifts and participating in the creativity of God.

We live in a very visual age! And so prayer can and should at times be visual. In fact, Christian prayer and worship has been visual since the very beginning – with focal points for prayer, movement, ritual acts, etc.

For example, just think about things such as The Rosary, which uses touch, imagination and the repetition of well-known prayers. Pilgrimage uses movement – the movement of our whole body! We enhance the liturgical space in our church buildings with symbols and focal points. We light candles, which is visual and physical. To name just a few!

Although this worksheet deals with the use of *Microsoft PowerPoint* in Christian prayer and worship, there are obviously other creative forms of media available.

Different Ways of using Power Point

Text of Hymns and Prayers

This is obviously a straightforward use. However, there is no need to reproduce *all* the words that are used. For instance, for the Holy Eucharist, you do not need to reproduce all the words of the president: just the words

for congregational participation. This then allows the liturgy to be something dynamic in which people are involved – not something that they read through!

Also, instead of having words on a blank background, you could paste an image in as a backdrop to the words.

Add Pictures to Draw out the Meaning of the Words/Text

If you have words of a prayer why not accompany them with an appropriate image? Though don't make the slide too busy or the children and young people will find it difficult to read the words *and* look at the pictures!

Use Images and/or Text as People Gather

Use pictures as people gather into the space to subtly introduce the theme of the assembly, and focus the children's and young people's attention as soon as they enter.

Or simply use *PowerPoint* to project an image as a backdrop to the liturgical/worship space – a kind of electronic banner!

Use Images as a Focus for Prayer

Remember, prayer isn't just words! You can use one picture or several pictures within a slideshow to aid prayer! Especially when accompanied by music.

Combine Images and Music

The use of video to add a different dimension to music has been popular now for decades. And this can be the case for prayer. You could use religious songs or music but also try using a contemporary non-religious music track and draw out a Christian message or meaning with images.

Accompany Spoken Words with Images

Whether you are telling a story or leading a prayer or meditation, pictures can help children to listen!

Specific Examples

- For a reading from one of the Epistles, create an e-mail template on your slide and add the words of the reading as though they are being typed 'live.'
- During a reading, why not draw attention to key words or phrases by having them appear then disappear on the screen at the appropriate time? Try out different *Custom Animations* and *Slide Transitions* to do this effectively
- Accompany a Scripture Reading with images to draw out its meaning. Either images from the Reading itself, such as painting, drawings, clip art, pupils own work or contemporary images that relate the Reading to modern day living.
- Create a music video as prayer using still images in a slideshow. This can be very effective and moving.
- Stations of the Cross. Make the journey to the Cross, using music and prayers and appropriate images.
- Simply have slowly changing images during the assembly or worship time.
- If you're having a drama use images as stage scenery!
- Use some principles seen on TV Commercials, adverts or programmes to instil fun into your assembly. For example, having text scroll along the bottom of the screen with appropriate news headlines (Good News/Gospel headlines!) can be fun and effective!

Some Practical Tips

Finding Pictures

Images may be taken with a digital camera, scanned in, found on Resource CDs, or taken from the internet (E.g. www.google.co.uk). Bear in mind that some pictures may be subject to copyright.

Image Size

The size of an image can sometimes affect the speed at which the computer is able to execute the *Slide Transition* or *Custom Animation*, particularly large GIF images. If this becomes a problem, you can easily change them into smaller JPEG images using your picture editing facility in another programme.

Editing Pictures

Images can be edited within the *Powerpoint* slide. However, if you wish to take a more creative approach (particularly if you wish to create a montage) you could create and edit images in *Microsoft PictureIt!* or other Image Editing programmes.

It often looks more effective if the image fills the whole of the screen, if possible. If not, sometimes a black background to the slide allows the image greater clarity.

Slide Transition

Ensure that the *Slide Transition* and any *Custom Animation* you create do not dominate or 'ridicule' the content. For example, having pictures fly across the screen in different directions can divert attention away from the actual pictures themselves. An exception, of course, would be if you were using a certain animation or transition for a particular effect. Otherwise, it's better to use a subtle transition, such as 'Fade through Black.'

What Pictures?

Obviously pictures should be used that correspond to the age group you are working with. So consider whether

something is too adult or too young. Is a picture too abstract? Will it fail to make sense without some explanation? This is particularly appropriate if your image is part of a fast moving slide show.

Also, when working with older children and young people it sometimes pays to be subtle in your picture choice, to give an alternative angle on a prayer, meditation or reading.

Resizing Images

When resizing an image be careful to keep the proportions. To enable this you can often *crop* pictures before you enlarge them. Also, the pixel size of the image may be too small to enlarge without distorting the image and losing detail.

Fonts

Be careful what colour and size of font is used, considering the needs of those who are visually impaired in any way.

Also, avoid fonts that are too busy to read! Sometimes, people use fonts that look churchy or religious. This really does give the wrong impression and often are not easy to read! Use something that is plain, clear and simple to read!

Music

If you're using music to accompany videos it is often easier to do this on a separate CD player. Often using the CD Drive of the PC/Laptop can slow down or interrupt the PP presentation. You can insert a CD sound from the laptop but only on individual slides and not for a sequence. To time the slides for the particular song needs to be done manually. Clicking on the *Rehearse Timings* on the Slideshow menu of the Toolbar only allows you to change the whole of the slide show and not just a part of it. However, you may set up a new Presentation, rehearse and save the timings in this way, then copy and paste the slides into your original presentation. Easier and quicker!

Video

Video can be added to a *PowerPoint* Presentation simply by adding it to one of the slides. Click on *Insert* on the Toolbar and then click on *Movies and Sounds* on the Drop Down Menu. Videos can be created and edited in *Microsoft Movie Maker* or programmes such as *Pinnacle*.

Slides

It's often easier and gives your more freedom to insert a blank slide rather than an *AutoLayout* slide one of the templates. Click on *Insert* on the toolbar, and then click on *Blank* slide.

Screens

Sometimes, people project their Presentation onto a wall rather than a screen. If the wall is white then that is fine. However, if it off white, cream or some other colour it may change the colour of your images and text.

For larger gatherings and special occasions you may wish to consider hiring larger screens and also using the option of rear projection, which can often be more effective. As a cheaper option, large white sheets can be used.

Often, two screens can be effective – obviously you will need two projectors and the appropriate cables and connectors.

The Whole Thing!

There's more to using *PowerPoint* than just adding images and text to the worship you have prepared. Think about how it all fits together as a whole. Take a holistic approach to worship!

The Liturgical Space

Remember that the whole space you are using becomes the worship space. If you are using a screen consider how that relates to the other things you are using? For instance, at The Holy Eucharist, does the screen dominate the altar and lectern? How does it all fit together?

Sometimes we may arrange things because we like them or it 'looks pretty.' Ask yourself the question, 'How does this help those present to worship?' How does it enable the children and young people to be and become the people of God?

Whenever you are arranging your space think what you are trying to do and why. For example, don't clutter the altar! The only items that should be placed on or near the altar are a clean white cloth and candles. Nothing else should be placed on the altar until they are ready to be used. This goes for book-stands, chalice, etc.

Also, another trap to avoid falling into is to try to arrange a school hall like a traditional church building! This is particularly ironic as lots of church communities are reordering their space!

Try not to replicate symbols. Don't overcrowd the area with symbols, items or other artefacts.

Liturgical Year

The Liturgical Year enhances and enriches the worshiping life of the Church and so should be considered when arranging worship, particularly in a Church School. Bear in mind the seasons of the Liturgical Year. So, for instance, don't use Alleluias in Lent! What colours and pictures can you use in your *PowerPoint* Presentation to correspond to the season?

Finally...

The whole thing doesn't have to be a lot of hard work! Whenever you are trying to be creative with worship, take a broad view. Think about how you can do the same old thing in a new way! And enjoy it!

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