

faith at home

Weekly Resources for Schools

PHASE: PRIMARY

How do we Flourish Together?

THEME: Diversity & Inclusion



KEY CONCEPT/MESSAGE:

We are all different and our diversity is our strength and a beautiful expression of who we are and who God is. Christians believe that every single person is created in the image of God and therefore of equal and inherent worth. In the story of Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman at the well, we find an encounter of difference approached with love and inclusion.

BIBLE STORY OF THE WEEK:

Jesus with the Samaritan Woman: John 4



Gathering

Share an image of some beautiful wild flowers of many different colours as you say this welcoming prayer:



We gather together today as a family. We are like a body made up of many parts. We belong together and we need each other but we are not all the same. Thank you for diversity in our midst, like a field of wildflowers making the landscape beautiful. Let us think about difference and celebrate diversity in all we do.

Amen.

When we see the wild flowers, we see a host of beautiful colours. They bring joy to us because of the great diversity we see. We do not think to say, 'Oh, I see no yellow, I see no blue or pink, they are all the same!' We are jubilant because they are all so beautifully different and the vibrance may remind us of our own uniqueness and ability to bring a smile to the face of those who love us.

We don't ignore differences in nature, we celebrate them. Do we do that for people too?

I wonder...how do you celebrate difference?

Invite pupils to share their responses to this question.

Imagine a conversation between the flowers in the picture. The poppy might say to the rose, "Do your thorns prickle you?". The rose might ask the dandelion, "How do you do that thing with all the fluff?" The dandelion might enquire with the poppy, "How do you feel about your red petals representing something so sad?". The poppy might then ask the daisy, "How does it feel to be everywhere?" This conversation would be about acknowledging difference and wanting to learn about it, from it and to celebrate it together.

When we celebrate our differences as humans, we are showing how much we care about each other and how important it is to communicate with each other. Saying we can't see difference would be like saying we can't see all the beautiful flowers. The whole meadow is made all the more beautiful by the variety before us.

Engagement

In the Bible there is a story about a Samaritan woman at a well who Jesus has a conversation with. This is a woman whom some people might have labelled as 'different'. Because of this the Jews may have chosen to not have a conversation with her. They would almost certainly not have asked her for a drink! But Jesus did, much to her amazement. She was not used to being seen, or spoken to, by those who saw her as different to them. Not only that, Jesus was interested in her life! He allowed her to meet a need of his (his thirst) whilst also trying to help her. He included her and welcomed her to join the growing number of people who believed he was the Messiah, the Son of God. Because of her and the story she told all her friends about the man who saw she was different and welcomed her anyway, many Samaritans believed in Jesus. You can find the story in John Chapter 4 and Free Bible Images have some great sets of pictures you can use for telling the story [here](#). Alternatively, you can watch a clip telling the story [here](#).

I wonder...why do you think Jesus welcomed her?

I wonder...how do you think that made her feel?

Watch the 'Does our behaviour matter?' clip from the Faith at Home video, in which some young people are discovering that boxes don't help and that the great thing we all have in common is that we are made in God's image! God is a God of difference and a God who includes everyone!

I wonder if you can think of a time when you thought of people as 'in' or 'out'? Why was that?

I wonder how might it feel to be in the 'out' group?

Not much has changed in the thousands of years since Jesus walked the dusty streets of Israel. People still sometimes choose to see difference as negative and a reason to avoid others. A social psychologist called Henri Tajfel noticed this happening in society. He saw what he called 'in groups' and 'out groups', where people would only feel like they belonged with people that they thought were just like them. This idea can cause a lot of harm, and the people we might decide to put in the 'out group' actually have so much in common with us, and their difference would bring something interesting and special to our lives. When we put people in boxes we are missing out!



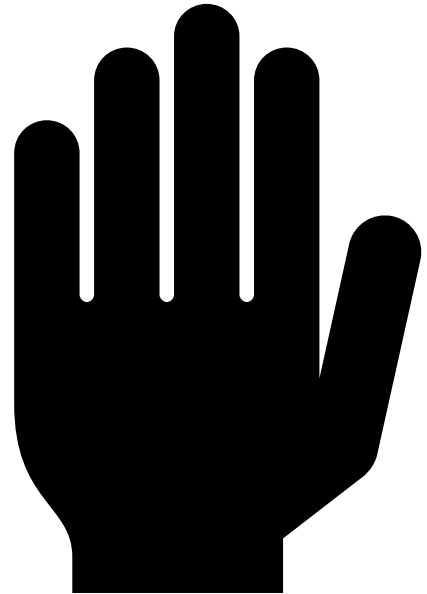
Martin Luther King once said:

“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”

Imagine a beautiful coat, woven with beautiful threads and embroidered with wonderful images. All those threads are depending on each other to make a beautiful garment. It takes all of them to create something vibrant and special, just the same as it takes diversity and difference to really celebrate God’s wonderful creation!

This sounds very simple but it isn't always easy. Sometimes when we see difference we are still worried by it. Sometimes we feel as if we don't understand someone because of the difference. We might have a passing thought about someone different which makes us feel afraid or want to stay away. That can happen to anyone from time to time.

Shaun Dellenty has written a helpful book called 'Celebrating Difference', about a whole-school approach to LGBTQ+ inclusion. Within the book he recommends a simple strategy for 'checking in with ourselves' with regards to how we feel about difference and how this can lead to prejudice. He calls it 'Place your Prejudice on your Palm', or PPOP, and the concept below is included with permission from Shaun. Prejudice is a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience. We often pick up these ideas and do not know how or why. Shaun recommends that people visualise their prejudices on their palm and ask themselves questions, bringing **curiosity not judgement** to these. In going through a process like this, Shaun hopes that the fingers will not close around the prejudice thoughts we have and create a fist, which would lead to damage to those who are different to ourselves.



Invite pupils to imagine the thoughts and feelings they sometimes have about people who are different to them which might feel negative in some way or like blaming them for something that isn't right in the world, even though they might not have any reasons for that or have even spent time with that person getting to know them. We call this prejudice.

Reassure pupils not to feel shame about these things that they sometimes think or feel, but instead to be **curious** about these ideas and to **wonder** for themselves about these thoughts and feelings and why they are there. Invite pupils to consider whether they have prejudiced thoughts from time to time and invite them to go through the process described in the box above. There is no need for anyone to ever reveal what these thoughts and feelings are and the emphasis is always on being curious instead of being judgemental.

You might invite pupils to ask themselves questions such as:

- **What are my prejudices towards people who are different?**
- **If I could imagine my prejudices here on my palm, what would they look like, feel like, taste like, smell like?**
- **If I give a voice to my prejudices, what does that sound like?**
- **What texture would my prejudices have- are they bumpy or spikey? Could I hurt myself on them?**
- **Why are they here? Where did they come from?**

Young children might like to simply think about a feeling they sometimes have about people who are different to them that they cannot explain. If they could see that feeling, what would it look like? What would it feel like to touch? They might imagine it as a pet or an animal and think about how they could make it feel calm again by spending time together with that person, listening to them, offering a smile.

Sticking with the hand theme, following the act of collective worship you may want to invite each pupil to draw around their hand and draw images of hope and messages of love and celebration of diversity, using these to form a beautiful display.

Sending

We have thought already about in groups and out groups and about not putting people into boxes, as we saw in the film clip we watched. You could create a visual representation of this by decorating a box with a picture of the world and pulling out from it diverse images of people, a variety of different foods, diverse clothing, etc. What a brilliant box of God's wonderful, diverse creation!

HORSESHOES
of
friends > CIRCLES
of
friends

LIFE CAN BE LONELY.
STAND IN HORSESHOES.

-Glennon Doyle



Author Glennon Doyle encourages people to think in horseshoes instead of circles when they think about how they act towards other people. Horseshoe shapes are open, they are not enclosed like circles. Circles can keep people in, but they can also keep people out. If you are on the outside of a circle of friends because they perceive you as being just too different, that is a very lonely place to be. At the well with the Samaritan woman, Jesus was thinking in horseshoes rather than circles. He welcomed her in, even though everyone else believed she was too different.

Create a moment of quiet reflection with music or silence. Invite pupils to trace a horseshoe on their palm as they think about people who are different to them in some way. Invite them to imagine welcoming them into their friendship group, so that 'us' and 'them' becomes 'we'. Go back to class and out to play with horseshoes instead of circles!



SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

(practical ways to help us explore faith and develop spiritually at home together)

EXPERIENCES that can help us **ENCOUNTER**:



Someone who has tried to explore the concept of God being a God of diversity is artist, Meg Wroe. Meg took the famous icon of Rublev's Trinity and recreated her own version of it to show how difference and diversity are all part of God's loving expression towards the world he created. Christians believe that all people, of all skin types, from all nations and cultures, are made in God's image.

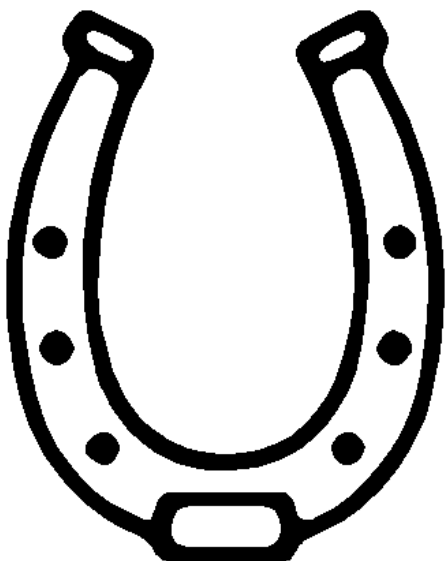
Used with permission from the artist herself, her wonderful images can be viewed [here](#).

I wonder what Meg was trying to show through these images?

I wonder how this captures something about God?

I wonder what this tells us about ourselves and how we should live?

Trinity After Rublev, Meg Wroe



Henri Tajfel discovered that people tend to look at all the ways in which people are similar, label those things as good and use that as a reason to keep only those people in our 'in groups'. When we only stick to our 'in groups', we really miss out on experiencing the fabulous diversity in all people, created in God's image. Choose to have a conversation with someone who you might previously have thought of as part of the 'out group'. It could be someone in your class or someone who lives by you. Start by saying hello, ask a friendly question, give them a 'friendship token' of a smile or a wave, think about how you can make your in group into a horseshoe and make room for them. Afterwards, draw them inside a horseshoe with you:

In Romans 12:4-5 the Apostle Paul compares the Christian family to a body: “⁴For as in one body we have many members,^[a] and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” It takes all the different parts to make one beautiful body! We don’t pretend a hand is an ear or get upset because a foot is not an eye. We love and appreciate all the different parts of our bodies because we need them all to be whole. In the same way, we need people to be different so that together we can express the fulness of God’s love. Where possible, create opportunities and spaces for pupils to encounter people from a diverse range of cultures, faiths and ethnicities.

ACTIVITIES that can develop PRACTICES-HABITS:

The Bible also says the family of God is like a vine, with Christians connected to Jesus and each other like branches. Draw yourself a vine with lots of branches and plenty of leaves. Every time you encounter somebody different to you, in real life at school or on the street, in films or on TV, in books and stories, draw that person or write their name on one of the leaves. Over time, you will create a beautiful image of diversity, reminding you of God’s love for all people.





Indra's Web is a metaphor which finds its origins in Buddhist and Hindu traditions. In his abode, the god Indra has a huge bejewelled net where at every intersection hangs a beautiful jewel. It is a magnificent site to behold! On inspecting each jewel, the viewer is able to see the brilliance of all the other jewels reflected within it. The mutual appreciation and celebration of diversity is captured in this beautiful image.

I wonder if this web could exist without all the jewels and all the connections?

I wonder if it would be as beautiful if it were just one thread and one jewel?

I wonder how the image of Indra's Web can capture the brilliance of diversity and the importance of accepting and including everybody?

I wonder how the Apostle Paul's idea of a body and this image of a web capture the same ideas about difference and diversity?

You could adapt the idea of Indra's Web and create a necklace or a bracelet, using different beads for every time you have celebrated diversity and difference in some way. In no time at all, you will have a beautiful string of beads to remind you of God's wonderfully diverse creation of human beings.

Read some Bible passages about diversity and think about what they might mean:

I Corinthians 12: 12-30

Colossians 3: 11

Philippians 2: 130

CONVERSATIONS which CONNECT COMMUNITIES

Are all people equal in God's Sight?

Yes. Christians believe that when God made humans (you can read about this in Genesis, right at the start of the Bible) he made them all in his own image. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul confirms this, saying in the Letter to the Galatians: "*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" It takes all of us to represent the fullness of God's image in Creation.

Does diversity show us something about God?

Yes. God made humans in his own image. He didn't make us to be all the same, so the diversity of the human race illustrates the diverse creativity and the vast love of God.

Can I do anything to help when there are people who see difference as a problem?

Yes. Just keep being you. Think about creating horseshoes of friendship and not circles. Make room for people, include people who are different, welcome them when others are not and listen to their stories. It might not be able to solve all the world's problems but it will make a huge difference to that person to feel seen, celebrated and included.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP – OUR APPROACH

INVITATIONAL

Everyone is welcome to take part in collective worship, as much or as little as they or their parents and carers are comfortable with. This means we use invitational language and consider carefully our choice of words and songs. Children are invited to pray but are not compelled or expected to do so; they always have a choice. We invite them to pray or reflect in whatever way they would usually as a family, if that is part of their home experience.

INCLUSIVE

Acts of worship need to be inclusive of all. Therefore, we choose topics and ideas that are shared by different faiths and worldviews. When we present Christian teaching, we make it clear that this is 'what Christians believe', saying things like:

'I wonder why this story might be important to Christians?'

'The story today comes from the Bible (the holy book of Christians), which teaches that ...'

Our worship should be accessible for children and young people with a range of different backgrounds, and so we take care that activities do not require expensive resources. We also offer a variety of activities, so that children and young people with differing needs can all find something they can engage with.

INSPIRING

We aim for our acts of worship to inspire those engaging with them. How might it engage their emotions, enabling a sense of peace, comfort, hope or motivation? How might it inspire them into action, into thinking differently and considering their behaviour or actions? How might it inspire them to reflect on their faith or beliefs, and on the faith or beliefs of others?