



13. God with us

Age range: Primary

Theme: We gather as a community for collective worship that is **inspiring, invitational and inclusive**, reflecting the fact that we are a part of a diverse school family and the wider church community. We begin this academic year with a reminder that it's good to be grateful. Research reveals the importance of gratitude even in the midst of adversity: that being aware of each day's 'blessings' can counteract anxiety, and so this term, we want to encourage schools to continue to do this through their collective worship. We provide a script with reflective ideas for classroom use and PowerPoint; both have additional content that you may wish to spread across the week and use in classrooms to ensure that you are meeting the requirement for daily collective worship and to support the spiritual flourishing of your whole school community.

You may need to tailor this script to suit the needs, age range & levels of concerns of your school community, which of course includes adults as well as children. **One of the most important – and challenging – beliefs that Christians have about Jesus is that he is God 'incarnate' – literally, God 'in the flesh', which is at the heart of the celebration of Christmas. This assembly continues through the season of Advent, and links to how Jesus is called 'Immanuel', which means 'God with us'.**

The first & final slides in the accompanying PowerPoint contain phrases that you might want to use before you open a door – and afterwards.



How does this link to your school's Christian vision & values?

Use this section to reference how your school's vision & values feature across this season of Advent. You may also have routines and 'rituals' that are a part of your school life at this time of year. Your unique vision, by its very nature, has profound connections to the salvation story, and the person of Jesus, which should be celebrated at this time of year.

How might this link with the Guildford Diocese spirituality offer?



This icons in this section show how the collective worship theme links with the elements of **self, others, beauty** and/or **beyond**

- That each person has a name that they were given when they were born, which may have special meaning**
- That we are each part of a bigger family, including a school 'family', and that each family member is special & connected**
- That, for Christians, at the heart of the Christmas 'story' is a very special baby, who Christians believe is 'God with us'**

Resources:

- The PowerPoint slides are numbered with a point in the script so you can find your way, and the parts in bold show you where to click on to activate the next slide or animation. To help any children with visual timetabling, we include an icon for each different part of this collective worship in the top right corner of each slide.
- Today's 'engage' focus reflects on the meaning of one of Jesus' names, 'Immanuel' – which means 'God is with us'. The introductory game uses some familiar names and their meanings, and we would encourage you to customise this with some names from your own school community.
- The words 'Immanuel – 'God with them'' are a feature within today's script. If you wanted to, you could use this as a call and response each time: when you say 'Immanuel', pupils could respond each time with 'God with them'
- **Further opportunities for spiritual development: please use our [online Advent calendar](#).** Each school day during Advent (and extra for weekends if desired), there are materials to use for classroom reflection.

Gathering:

Slide 1: Flickering Advent candles stilling exercise



Use the stilling slide if desired: the suggested words should be spoken slowly, leaving pauses inbetween to create a sense of stillness.

As you sit quietly here, watch the candles as they flicker.....**PAUSE]**

Now practise slower breathing.....in.....and out.....in.....and out.....keep this going as you continue to watch....**[PAUSE]**

You maybe notice that you are feeling calmer and more relaxed....**[PAUSE]**

As you breathe, think about yourself and what you bring into this time today.....**[PAUSE]**

We come into this special / sacred space and time to be still....to think deeply....to be together as a school community.....

In our time together today, we will..... **Play a game.....think about some words together....and then reflect on what they might mean for us here in this school community as we continue through Advent together.**

But first, let's welcome one another as we begin....we have a brand new greeting, especially for this Advent season as we begin to move towards Christmas....

- **Slide 2:** Use the Advent greeting on the screen.

Leader: As we light our Advent candle(s)...

All: May our time today brighten our lives, like light in the darkness.



Engaging:



- **Slides 3-7: the Name Game**

We're going to start our time together today with a game about names. Some of you may know what your name means – and it may have been chosen for you because of that meaning. *[Play this together – the answers are on each slide. You might also want to pause and allow a few children to share their own names here – try not to choose anyone whose name appears on slides 4-7!!]*

- **Slide 8: Jesus – 'Yeshua, 'God saves'**

'Yeshua' is the Hebrew version of the name 'Jesus', and means 'God saves' This is a really important idea for Christians – the idea of Jesus as Saviour, the Great Rescuer. We often think about this at Easter time, but you can also hear these words in the story of the very first Christmas – listen out for them!

- **Slide 9:** In the history of God's people, in the stories of Moses, the Bible tells of how God 'dwelled' (that's another word for 'lived') in the tabernacle, which was a special tent that Moses built, according to instructions that God gave him. You can see an image of it on the screen here. This tabernacle, which in Hebrew means 'dwelling place', went with the people on their journey. God literally travelled 'with them' on all their adventures.

Much later in the history of God's people there are some words that are often read during Christmas services, ancient words that Christians believe are words about Mary & Jesus:

She will give birth to a son, and she will call him 'Immanuel' – which means 'God is with us'.

Isaiah 7:14

This name, Immanuel, is one of the names given to Jesus. This is a very big idea, that God might be 'with us' – not living in a tent, but as we heard last week in the words of the Angel Gabriel....

- **Slide 10:**come to earth as a tiny baby. **Immanuel – 'God with us'**

We're going to think about this idea now as we hear about the visitors who came to see this miracle – and finish off the story that Christians (and we in school!) tell every Christmas. As we tell the story, we are going to think about how these different people experienced 'God with them'and try to imagine how it felt....

[there are wondering questions to think / talk about to go with each slide]

- **Slide 11:** The story tells us that Baby Jesus was born in a stable because all the inns were busy.

I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt to know that this baby was 'Immanuel – God with them'?....

This part of the story is especially important to Christians because they believe that Jesus, God's son, was born as a human baby, to live a human life, just like them.

- **Slide 12:** The account in Luke's gospel tells how the angels went first to the very poorest people in Bethlehem – some shepherds, who were out in the fields watching over their sheep through the night.
- **Slide 13:** The shepherds heard from the angels how this new baby would be their Saviour and so they rushed to Bethlehem to find Jesus in the stable, just as the angels had said they would! *[did you spot the word 'Saviour' – rescuer there?!]*

I wonder how the shepherds felt knowing that they were the very first visitors to see 'Immanuel – God with them'?

- **Slide 14:** After the shepherds left the stable, they told everyone they met about what they had seen – how God had been born among them.

I wonder how these people felt when they heard that God was 'with them'?

- **Slide 15:** We hear in Matthew's gospel (another part of the story) that wise men had been studying their books, maps and charts. They believed that one day, a new King would be born – and that a bright star would tell them when. They had been watching the skies for years and years, waiting for the moment when this time would come. And so, the star led them to this new King. The gifts that they brought with them – gold, frankincense and myrrh – showed that this was no ordinary King...

- **Slide 16:** The wise men were the final visitors to see the good news that not just a new King, but God himself, had been born among them.

I wonder how the wise men felt to know that God was finally here – with them?and why they worshipped?



- **Slide 17:** But we also know that during that very first Christmas, there were many people gathering in Bethlehem as Caesar had ordered that everyone go back to the town of their birth to be counted. Bethlehem was a very busy place, full of people.
I wonder if these people had any idea that God was ‘with them’?....it’s quite likely that very few of them ever realised that some very important events were to take place. I wonder what they might have done if they had realised that Immanuel – ‘God with them’ – had been born?

Slide 18: Responding (and words for worship)

Let’s bring our thoughts together now.

We’ve heard that at the very first Christmas, many people came to see Jesus, Immanuel – ‘God with us’ ...whom Christians believe to be God’s son.

I wonder what you think about the idea of Immanuel – ‘God with us’?

I wonder what difference it might make as we gather as a school community this Christmas time?

We’re coming to the end of our time together today, so let’s be quiet with our own thoughts.....

....we’ve heard today about the people who witnessed the arrival of Immanuel – ‘God with us’

....we’ve heard how the wise men’s visit caused them to worship....

....and Christians ever since have done the same....



Slide 19: Opportunity for reflection / prayer

We’re going to give you an opportunity now to listen, reflect, or pray – whichever you feel most comfortable with.

One of the most familiar Christmas carols that you might hear, or even sing, over Christmas is one called ‘O Come All Ye Faithful’ – which was first published in 1751, but was probably written much earlier than that (in an ancient language called Latin....) We’re going to use a few of the words to help us to pray now (and in a while, we can listen to it too!)

Slide 20: Prayer

Like the wise men – and those many other visitors who came to gaze at Jesus, Immanuel – ‘God with us’ – the words that Christians sing say **‘O come let us adore him!’**

If you want to pray with me, then you might want to join in those words when they come on the screen, or you can continue to be quiet with your own thoughts.

Slide 21: As we think about this special story, of Jesus, born as a baby.... **‘O come let us adore him!’**

Slide 22: As we remember how the shepherds saw him first.... **‘O come let us adore him!’**

Slide 23: As we remember how the wise men knelt in worship.... **‘O come let us adore him!’**

Slide 24: With Christians all over the world, may we sing this Christmas time.... **‘O come let us adore him!’**

Slide 25: Immanuel – God is with us.

Slide 26: Amen

To listen to & sing:

[Mary had a baby](#) (BBC) [The Virgin Mary had a baby boy](#) (BBC), [The Angels Knew](#) (NBD) or [Silent Night](#) (BBC) or school choice

Slide 27: Sending

(You might want to use this slide throughout the Advent season to end your time together)

Leader: As we leave this place and time....

All: May the light of Advent shine brightly in our school today.



Further ideas to build spirituality in your classroom reflection areas:

Use the online Advent calendar linked from [here](#), to support spirituality in your classrooms during Advent

