



### 3. A place of welcome

**Age range:** Primary

**Theme:** We gather together 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, serving the needs of our unique school contexts. As human beings, we have storytelling in our DNA, and so for this final term of the school year, we offer some stories from across the world that help us to think about **'ourselves, others, beauty and/or beyond'**, and wonder together at the power of a story to help connect us and change us. We intentionally use **language from our Diocesan spirituality offer** throughout these resources and hope that this will help to build schools' understanding of the role of collective worship as part of spiritual flourishing. We continue our series of parables with another about seeds, from Matthew 13; the parable of the Mustard Seed. A beautiful image by artist Anne Brink – and the words she wrote about the image – help us to reflect on welcome, communities, and the world as a place of welcome for all, which fit well with the Diocesan language.



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

The class reflection materials for this term follow the same pattern as previous terms – think, talk and do – but also (where possible) relate to questions about **ourselves, others, beauty and beyond**. We consider the theme of welcome as part of today's materials, and encourage you to think about how your own school is a place of gathered welcome for all, across many different cultures and beliefs. Especially emphasise any vision/values language that relates to this.

**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.
- You will also need some mustard seeds for use in the reflections and the story for this week: you should be able to find these in garden centres, or in the herbs and spices aisle at your local supermarket!
- The opening quiz [slides 4-11] features some flags for children to identify, along with a welcoming word in the language that is spoken there: if you have particular countries represented in your school community that are not used here, please replace them with ones that are more meaningful in your school's context.

**Gathering:**

**Slide 1: Dandelion seeds 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, look at the tiny dandelion seeds dropping from the sky..... [PAUSE]

Now practise slower breathing.....in.....and out.....in.....and out.....keep this going as you continue to look at the seeds....[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 **share a quiz, tell a story and then use it to help us to think.**

But first, let's welcome one another as we begin....

- **Slide 2:** Use our new gathering words for this term, or your usual greeting if you prefer. These greetings may change slightly each week to reflect the **spiritual elements** that we will be exploring in each week's materials.

**Leader:** As we gather to share our story today....

**All:** **May we grow in our understanding of ourselves and our actions towards others.**

*Here are BSL actions for some of the words:*

**Leader's words:**

Gather: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/gather> (1st video); Story: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/story> (1st video)

**Response words:**

Grow: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/grow> (2nd video); Ourselves: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/yourself> (2nd video); Actions: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/actions> (1st video)

**Engaging:**

- **Slide 3:** Last week, we heard a parable that Jesus told, about seeds – some that grew well, and **others that didn't**. In a short while, we will share another of Jesus' most famous parables, but first.....
- **Slide 4:** So, we're going to start with a game that will teach us how to welcome each other in many different



languages – some of which are spoken by families in our school community. First, you'll see a flag, then you tell me the country (if you know it)– and then we'll have a go at learning the word for 'Welcome' in that country [*use the slides that you have chosen, or my selection, slides 5-11*]

- **Slide 12:** Today, we are going to be sharing one of Jesus' parables, a story that will help us to think about the idea of welcome. Jesus' parables often started 'The Kingdom of God is like....' And this is no exception! It's a parable about something that's very small indeed...even smaller than the seeds we saw last week!
- **Slide 13:** ...a mustard seed – and it plays a BIG part in Jesus' story. **Use the script on p4, The mustard seed**
- **Slide 14:** [*show the picture of the mustard tree*] Just in case you think Jesus was joking about the size of the mustard tree, here's what one looks like. I think you'll agree that given how teeny-tiny a mustard seed is, that's quite extraordinary!
- **Slide 15: Let's go back to the parable.** Jesus hardly ever explained to the people who were listening to his stories what he meant: he left it up to them to decide. So that means that we can all have our own ideas! As you look at this image about the parable of the mustard seed, I wonder what you notice?..... [*PAUSE – you might want to allow some children to share their ideas*]
- The artist, Anne Brink, who generously allowed us to use her painting based on this parable, said this about her picture: 'I tried to depict a flourishing tree and a whole community, where people work and play in harmony, supporting one another, praising God and enjoying God's creatures and all of the wondrous creation. I wanted to suggest a.....world where people of all races, cultures and backgrounds share life in common, cooperate and live together.'

### Slide 15: Responding (and words for worship)

Spend a few moments now, just being still and looking at Anne's beautiful image..... [*PAUSE*]

....I wonder how it might help us to reflect on ourselves.....or on our relationship with others.....or our world as a wonderful place of welcome for all?.....



### Slide 16: Let's be still and quiet together now....

...in the stillness, let's think about the things that we've heard today....

...Jesus' parable was of a teeny-tiny, eeny-weeny, itty-bitty little mustard seed....

....a seed that grew into a mighty tree where birds came to live....

....a place where many creatures found a home....

....a place of welcome and of safety....

....I wonder how our school community might be a bit like this mustard tree?....

....think for a few moments about your place in our school community....

...about how you feel at home here, in our school, as a member of our school family....

....who else is a part of our school family, and how can we make sure that it is a place where everyone feels welcome?....

...in the quietness of this moment, use the time to think, or to pray....

### Slide 17: Prayer

I'm going to do this now in a reflective prayer. If you'd prefer not to pray, then just continue to be quiet with your own thoughts.

After I say the words 'Help us to remember,' you might like to join with me by using the words '**We are all welcome here**'. I will also give you some space to think each time.

So, let's pray.

God who welcomes all,

Whenever we see someone who looks left out.... [*leave a pause*]

Help us to remember, '**We are all welcome here**'

Whenever we feel that no-one notices us.... [*leave a pause*]

Help us to remember, '**We are all welcome here**'

Whenever someone new or someone different joins our class.... [*leave a pause*]

Help us to remember, '**We are all welcome here**'



God, in your Kingdom, help us to remember, 'We are all welcome here'

**Slide 18: Amen.**

**Sending: Slide 19**

**Leader:** As we leave this place and time and go into the day ahead...

**All: May we remember we are all welcome here!**



**To sing / listen to:**

[Big Family of God](#) (NBD) or [Shine](#) (NBD) or [Welcome](#) (BBC)



**Slide 20: Reflective areas**

*Put a small bowl of mustard seeds in your reflection area.*

**Do:** Hold a teeny-tiny mustard seed in your hand.

**Think:** Who is a part of our school community? Who has 'found a home' in our school?

**Talk:** How can we make sure that everyone feels welcome, and at home?  
Maybe pause and pray.....

# ***The mustard seed***

This is a parable that Jesus told about an eeny-weeny, teeny-tiny, itty-bitty little seed: a mustard seed, in fact!  
*[show it]*

It's so eeny-weeny, teeny-tiny, itty-bitty that if you dropped it on the ground, you'd never find it again! Or **would** you?.... *[leave pause]*

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven, God's kingdom, is like this eeny-weeny, teeny-tiny, itty-bitty mustard seed – a seed that a man took and planted in his field. And as most seeds do in good soil, it grew!

It grew..... not just a eeny-weeny, teeny-tiny, itty-bitty little bit, but a whole lot, into a strong and mighty mustard tree.

A tree that's **so** strong and **so** mighty that everyone can see it. A tree that's **so** big and **so** wide, that all sorts of birds build their nests and raise their young in its branches and animals find a place of safety amongst its roots. A tree that's **so** solid and **so** safe, that when winds come, all the creatures that shelter there are protected.

Jesus said 'The kingdom of heaven, God's kingdom, is like this mustard seed.'





*Jesus told a parable about a tiny mustard seed and how it grew into a great tree, where all sorts of birds and animals found a home.*



**Hold a teeny-tiny mustard seed in your hand.**



**Who is a part of our school community? Who has 'found a home' in our school?**



**How can we make sure that everyone feels welcome, and at home?**

**Maybe pause and pray.....**

