



8. Community (United we stand)

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. **This collective worship picks up on ways for you to talk about being connected as a school community, and contains 2 child-friendly illustrations of Aesop's proverb 'United we stand; divided we fall.'***



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

Use this section to reference how your school's vision & values help you to appreciate the wonderfully diverse community that you all belong to.

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**

-  **Understanding our individual need as a human being to be part of a community**
-  **The benefits of being part of a community, and the strength that there is in collaboration and friendship**
-  **The spirituality of friendship and community – that as human beings, we are 'wired' for deep connections with others**

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 challenge:** You will need some paper cups (about 12) and a piece of wood (or a large tray) to stand on. This illustration is designed to show that there is strength when people stand together. Put out one paper cup, facing downwards, and attempt to stand on it. You won't be able to! But try again with 10 cups together, side by side (you may need more / less, dependent on your size), with a tray on top, and it will bear your weight. **Please do test this out beforehand** – in which case you may need more cups! (NB this is a practical note, not a comment on anyone's weight! 😊)
- **There is a 2nd story included as part of the extra reflection materials for this week, on p5-7.**
- **For your class reflection areas:** the familiar acronym 'TEAM' (Together Everyone Achieves More) is so true! Re-use the Blessings Jar from week 2 (unless you're still gathering!) to create a 'TEAM' jar or box for the next few weeks, where children and adults can write on strips of paper & post the name of someone who's demonstrated TEAM qualities.

Gathering:

Slide 1: Welcome stilling exercise – Autumn leaves

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 leaves falling from the trees.....and bring your mind into a peaceful place [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.....and think about how peace has come upon us.... [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 are thinking about the blessing of community, and we will..... **play a game.....share some words together..... and think together about this special time of year.**

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

- **Slides 2/3:** Use the greeting to your school community – there are two slightly different versions from the point of view of the leader; choose which best fits your school's context. One uses words adapted from [Psalm 118:24](#)
- **Leader:** **This is a day that God has made!**
- **ALL:** **We will rejoice* and be glad* in it!**



OR:

- **Leader:** Today is a brand new day.....
- **ALL:** May we be a blessing to each other!

*There are different BSL signs for rejoicing and joy/gladness. View them here: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/rejoice>
Blessing: <https://www.signbsl.com/sign/blessing> (1st video)

Engaging:

- **Slide 4:** This term, we are thinking about our blessings – all the good things in our lives. Today we are going to be thinking about the blessing of being part of a community. Our story today will help us to think about how we are stronger together; that as human beings, we benefit from being in community together.
- **Slide 5:** To start us off, I have a challenge, using some paper cups to show that we are stronger together. *[Conduct the challenge with the paper cups, as you have rehearsed it. Talk about how it illustrates being stronger when we work together]*
- **Slide 6:** We're going to continue with this idea as we think more about us 'working together' as a community – and some ancient words, from 2 different sources
- **Slide 7:** We'll be coming back to the second quote later in our time together, but let's look at the first one first! 'United we stand, divided we fall'. Those words were written about 500 years before Jesus was born, by this man....
- **Slide 8:** Aesop – whose stories some of you might have heard of! We are going to hear one of these stories now, a story that he wrote to illustrate the words we just heard. As you listen, keep thinking.....
- **Slide 9: It's called The Four Oxen** *[use script]*
[After story] **Aesop ended his story with the moral: 'United we stand, divided we fall', which the oxen sadly found out the hard way.....** Working together gave the oxen strength that they didn't have when they were separated. In our world today, we're increasingly encouraged to be an individual and told that we should stand on our own two feet, and not rely on others. But many people believe that as human beings, we are made to be part of a community, that as we've heard today, we are strongest when we are in relationship with other people who will stick by us through thick and thin, good times and bad.
- **Slide 10:** Let's look at the second quote now: these are words written by a man named Paul, who was one of the very first Christians, and wrote many of the letters in the New Testament...He shared a very similar idea to Aesop, whose stories he would have known. In his version, Paul uses the idea of a body, arguing with itself, the head saying to the foot, for example, 'We don't need you!' That would be silly!!: we know that the whole body works together! You can read this in one of his letters, to the church in Corinth, where people had been arguing with each other and not working together. Some of you might remember that we heard these words last term with the help of **Mr. Potato-Head!**
- **Slide 11: So, whether you like Aesop's story, or Paul's words about the body** – they both show us that we are stronger as a community when we work together. I don't know if you've ever noticed, but there is a hidden word in 'Community' *[click – and you'll see it!]* When we are united – we are strong. This week, this is my challenge to you all – to find new ways to work together, to be united and to support others when they need it.

Responding (and words for worship)

....We're going to have some quiet moments now to think.....
....about being united as part of a community....
.....Aesop said 'United we stand; divided we fall'.....
...and Paul wrote about a body not fighting with itself, but all parts working together....
...as part of a school community, we are strongest when we stand together.....
....I wonder how we can be a stronger school community today?.....
...we are strong when we stand together....
.....when we work well, like the parts of a body.....



.... what could you do today that makes it easier for someone else to do the things they need to do?
.... how can you share the workload today, or support those who need your help....

Now I'm going to pray and ask God for his help to be a 'community in unity' today. If you'd like to pray with me, then in the quietness, find a way to make the prayer your own....

Slide 12: Prayer

Dear God

Thank you for the strength that we find in being part of this school community. Thank you for the things we have learned today, about standing together. Help us today to find ways to be a community that is strong and united because we share each other's loads and stand with those who need our support.

Slide 13: Amen

To listen to:

Lean on Me, by Bill Withers. There is a great video you can watch [here](#), performed by Bill Withers, John Legend and Stevie Wonder. Enjoy!

Songs to sing:

[Seasons](#) (NBD) or [Creator God](#) (NBD)

Slide 14: Sending

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

All: We will build a strong community.



Slide 15: Reflection areas

The familiar acronym 'TEAM' (Together Everyone Achieves More) is so true! Re-use the Blessings Jar from week 2 (unless you're still gathering!) to **create a 'TEAM' jar** or box for the next few weeks, where children and adults can write on strips of paper & post the name of someone who's demonstrated TEAM qualities.

Talk: When you are part of a TEAM – 'Together Everyone Achieves More'. How can we work better, together?

Think: Who have you seen being a TEAM player this week?

Do: Write their name on a strip of paper and put it into the jar. At the end of the week, read out all the names and celebrate!

Ideas to build spirituality, using the outdoors – and your classroom reflection areas:

- Use the reflective story, **The Body**, (p5, with paper resources to make on p6-7) to further explain the words used from 1 Corinthians 12.
- Challenge children to find their own examples to illustrate Aesop's moral '*United we stand; divided we fall*'.
- There are lots of **real-life stories** about animals working together to benefit each other e.g. dolphins 'herding' tuna into balls; geese flying in a 'V' to protect each other; penguins huddling during winter time in the Antarctic. Extend your learning into a writing activity that illustrates the moral of Aesop's story, but with different animals. Or find pictures of these animals and leave them in your reflective area to inspire children to keep working together. BBC Earth has a number of videos you could use together: [search here](#).
- With older children, encourage them to **find some pictures** to go with the words of Bill Withers' song 'Lean on Me' and use it as part of your next collective worship to inspire others. If you use [pixabay](#), which is a copyright-free image bank, search for 'work together' 'unity' or 'teamwork'.



The Four Oxen

In a dusty field lived four oxen – let's call them Daisy, Donald, Dennis and Doris. They were all firm friends. They didn't lead very exciting lives and spent most of their days chewing under the shade of the large olive tree that grew at one end of the field.

The only time they moved apart from each other was early in the morning, before the sun got too hot, and then, they would each find their favourite part of the field. As the day got hotter and hotter, they would keep each other company under the shade of the big olive tree, dozing, or chewing or just idly chatting. And that was how they lived out their days, until the day that they discovered how useful oxen's horns can be....

Early one morning, as the four oxen were going about their business in their favourite parts of the field, Doris suddenly pricked up her ears and raised her head as she heard a sound: a sound that she couldn't recall having heard before. It was the sound of soft feet, padding her way....then.... ...a rustling sound in the bushes beside the field. Doris instinctively knew that something was not right and, nostrils flaring, she called to her friends..... and from the other three corners of the field, Daisy, Dennis and Donald all rushed towards Doris, who was running away from the strange sound that she had heard. It was a **lion!**

The lion had spotted Doris chewing peacefully in her corner and had thought she would make a delicious breakfast But the lion had not been quite fast enough. The four oxen had turned their tails towards each other with their horns facing outwards, so that every place that the lion tried to attack them, ...he was met with their sharp, pointed horns. Eventually the lion realised he wasn't going to get a meal this way, gave up and padded away, leaving the four oxen panting and exhausted.

Day after day, the same thing happened. As each of the four oxen were going about their early morning activities, one of them would hear the soft, padding footsteps of the lion approaching. But each day, the lion was met by oxen horns whichever way he aimed his attack. Until about a week later, that is, when the oxen were thoroughly fed up with this new daily routine....

Standing tail to tail, tired and irritable, they began to argue with each other..... "Your tail's tickling me!" complained Doris.

"And you keep bumping into me!" moaned Dennis.

"Stand still, Dennis!" insisted Daisy.

"Leave him alone!" exclaimed Donald "He's not doing anything wrong.."

Before long, a full-scale argument was taking place.... And soon after that, each of the oxen sulked off to their own little corner of the field, completely forgetting why they had been huddled together in the first place. And *that* was just what the lion was waiting for....

Now that the oxen were no longer together, they couldn't protect each other with their horns, and the lion had not just breakfast, but lunch, tea and a supper-time snack as well!



'The Body', a reflective story based on 1 Corinthians 12

The body of Christ – connecting Compassion, Service and Community, written by the Barnabas in Schools team (and used, with many thanks!)

Resources: (instructions for the leader are in italics)

- You will need a story cloth to lay your figure on, and the images on p.6&7, printed on card & cut out
- The letters T-E-A-M cut out of card

(Place the backcloth down.)

How can we get on with other people, when we're all so different? In the Bible, Saint Paul suggested a special way of thinking about it. Christians call it 'The Body of Christ'.

The body of Christ has many different parts, just as any other body does.

(Place body parts on to the backcloth, all jumbled up)

Our bodies don't have just one part. They have many parts.

(Pick up a foot.)

Suppose a foot says, 'I'm not a hand, and so I'm not part of the body.' That wouldn't be right – it is still part of the body.

(Sort the body parts to make a body on the backcloth – head, torso, arms, hands, legs, feet)

A body isn't really a body, unless there is more than one part.

It takes many parts to make a single body.

Christians believe that God has put all parts of our body together in the way that he decided is best – even the parts that seem the least important are actually valuable.

He did this to make all parts of the body work together smoothly, with each part caring about the others.

If one part of our body hurts, we hurt all over. *(Look up as you talk to the group.)* That is like us. We can all work together to make things work smoothly. We are not all the same. Some people are good at one thing, other people are good at something else.

I wonder if you can think about something you are good at?

I wonder if you can think of something you need help with?

I wonder if you can think of something you could help other people with – give some examples – maybe you are good at Maths and could help someone or good at caring – being a good friend to people when they are sad or worried.

Sometimes we might need help with something, sometimes we can be the person who helps others. The old Greek word for this is 'Koinonia', meaning 'Fellowship' or 'Community'.

Compassion is about caring for one another.

Service is about helping one another.

Koinonia (Community) is about working together to be and do

the best

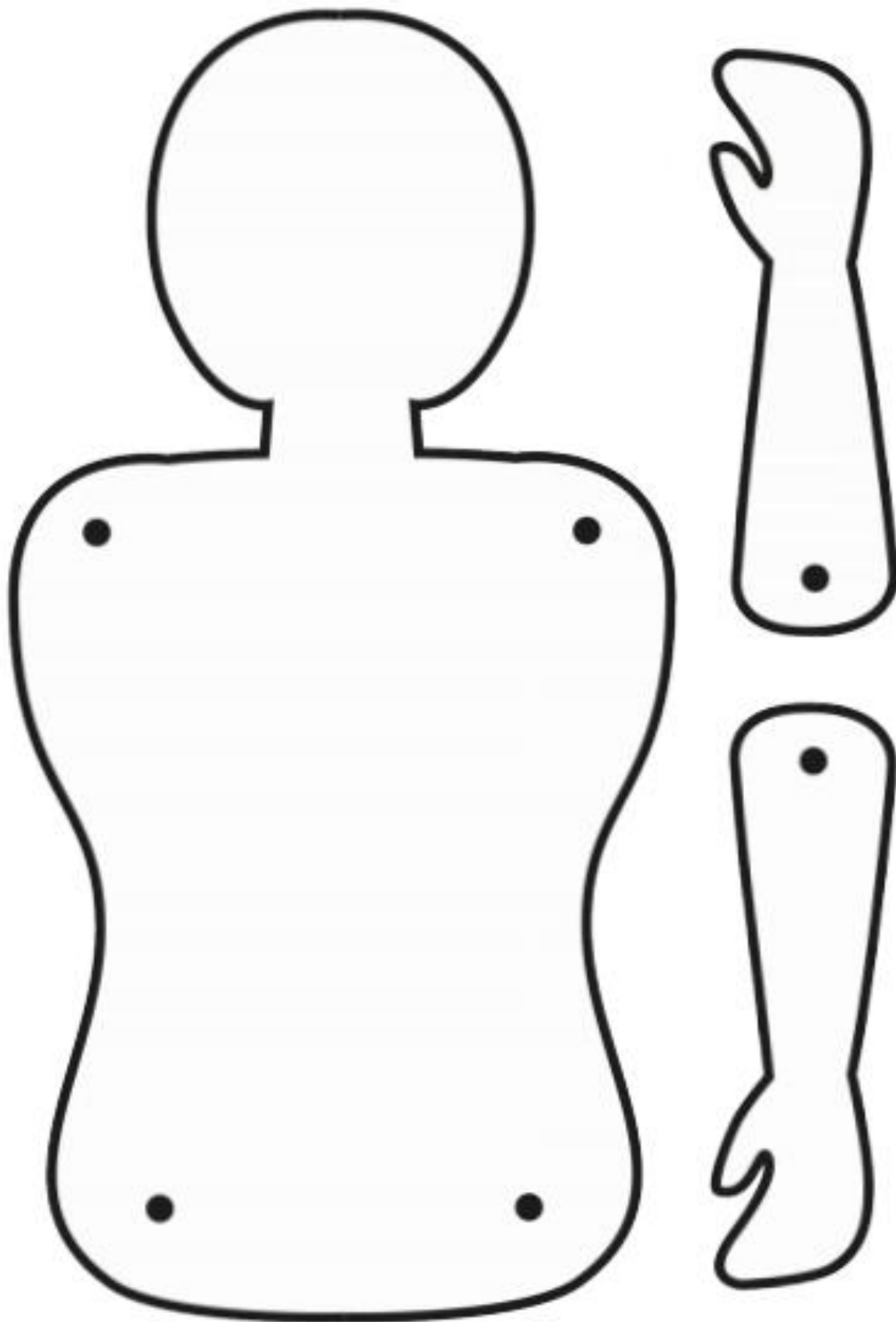
that we can together.

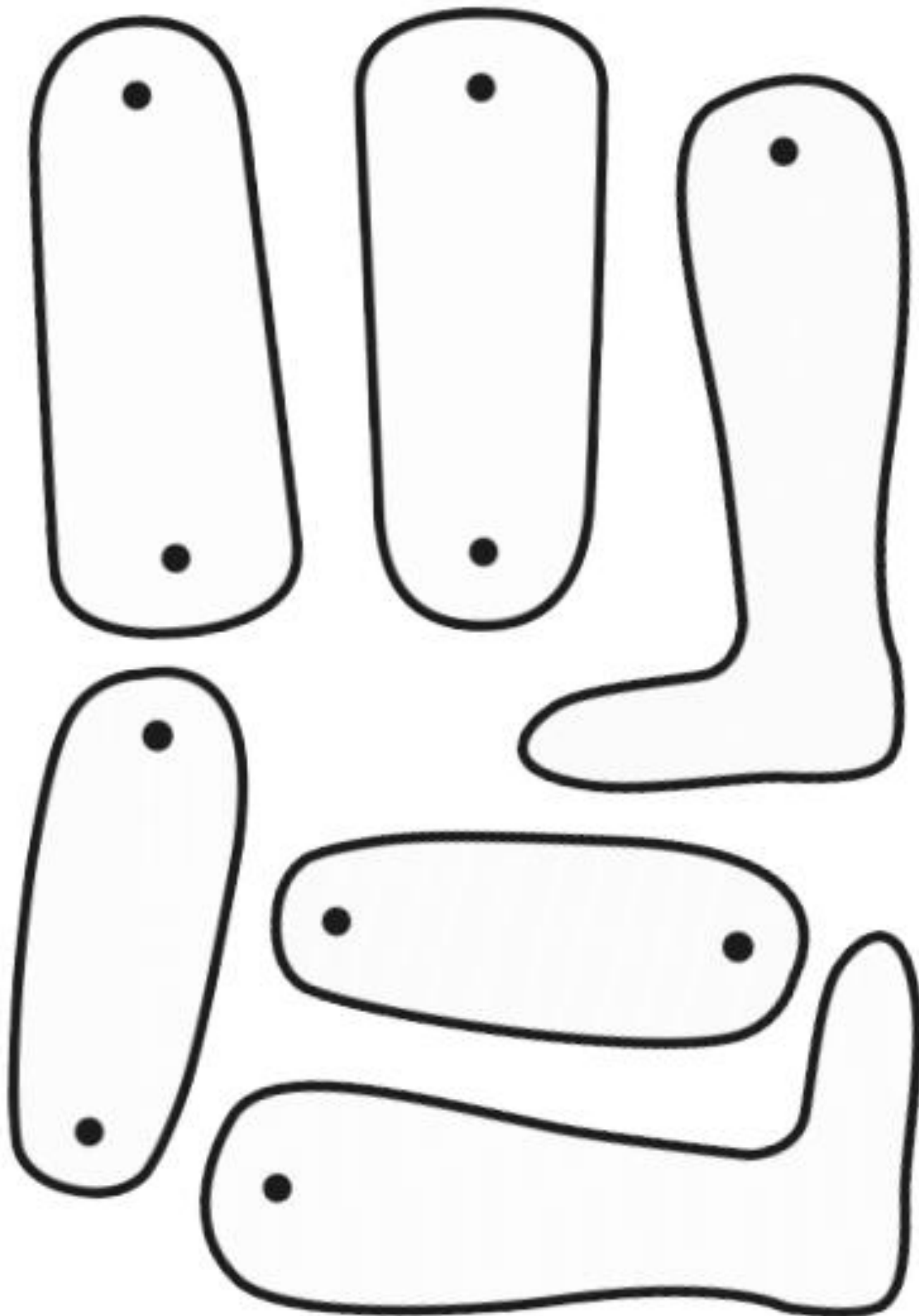
That might be at home, in our class, in our school, in the area or country where we live

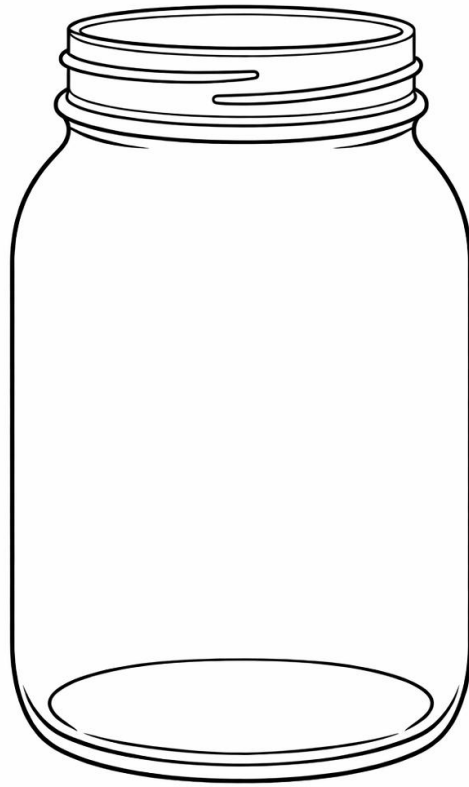
People can work as a team (lay down letters T-E-A-M)

Together Everyone Achieves More.









Aesop wrote: 'United we stand; divided we fall.'



**When you are part of a TEAM –
'Together Everyone Achieves
More'. How can we work better,
together?**



**Who have you seen being a TEAM
player this week?**



**Write their name on a strip of
paper and put it into the jar.**

