

Rebuilding Community

... Rebuilding the Wall

PACK 2 - Refreshing

Rebuilding and refreshing body, mind and spirit through prayer and reflection activities

REBUILDING
COMMUNITY

Rebuilding Community

... Rebuilding the Wall

This pack forms part of a suite of resources written by Diocesan Advisors from Canterbury, Guildford, Rochester and St Albans Dioceses to support schools in rebuilding their communities following lockdown.

Rebuilding Community ... Rebuilding the wall

The resources have been inspired by the Old Testament books, Ezra and Nehemiah. These books contain the story of the return of the Israelites from exile in Babylon. There are many parallels between the story of the Israelites and what is happening in schools now, hence why this story has been our foundation for these resources.

'Let us start rebuilding' (Nehemiah 2:18)

- The Israelites returned in small groups over time, with the first groups preparing the way for the rest to return.
- As they had been away from their home in Israel, they had to spend time reconnecting with each other, remembering all that had gone before and celebrating being together again.
- The Temple and walls around the city needed to be rebuilt when they returned. The foundations were still there, but they had to work together to rebuild what used to be there.
- When the Israelites returned, they recommissioned their land and worship space as a praise offering to God for bringing them back safely.
- After returning to Israel, God's people they spent time remembering all those who were no longer with them.

For more information about the story of Ezra and Nehemiah visit this website.
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/ezra-nehemiah/>



Other packs in the *Rebuilding Community* suite of resources

Pack 1 - Reflecting on the challenges. A short set of reflections for school leaders considering the parallels between Nehemiah's decision making and leadership situation and yours as a school leader now in 2020.

Pack 3 - Reconnecting - Practical resources to prepare to reconnect together in school, with a focus on wellbeing.

Pack 4 - Rebuilding - Acts of Collective Worship for primary schools based on the story of Nehemiah.

These have been written so that there is a version to use with pupils in school and a parallel version to send for pupils to use at home.

<https://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/education/christian-distinctiveness/collective-worship/covid-19-resources/rebuilding-community> (Further acts of worship can be found here.)

Pack 5 - Support for curating an age-appropriate Leavers' Service, marking transition in a spiritual way. This resource is based on the 'Road to Emmaus' story from the New Testament, when Jesus walked with two of his followers from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

A prayer inspired by Psalm 126

Through the ages, your people have had to rebuild and reconnect with their communities through times of trial and sadness and joy. We thank you God for your constant faithfulness through these times of rebuilding and readjusting.

Faithful God, we ask you to help and support each school community as they rebuild their 'walls' from their strong foundations and as they reconnect with each other refresh all those who are weary and tired.

We thank you God for each member of the school community, whether they are learning at home or within the school walls. As more of our school community return to our building, we pray for your continued protection and abundant love upon each of them now and ever more. Amen

We hope and pray that these resources will bless you and your school community as you **Reflect, Refresh, Reconnect, Rebuild,** and **Remember.**

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Jane Whittington	The Diocese of Guildford
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Refreshing

Rebuilding and refreshing body, mind and spirit through prayer and reflection

'Let us start rebuilding' (Nehemiah 2:18)

Introduction

In offering a selection of ideas for prayer and reflection, we are aware that schools may not return as a whole community on a given date. The suggestions offered, therefore, could be adapted for use at home, for individual classes or small groups in school, and even when the whole school returns. They could be situated in classrooms, shared areas, entrance halls and outdoors. We trust that you know your families and communities well and that you will take what is most appropriate for your context and enrich the lives of those in your care. These suggestions offer opportunities in the life and routines of a school day to stop and pay attention to your spiritual wellbeing and enrichment.

The resources suggested here are not exhaustive. They are taken from

<https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/>

<http://www.stapleford-centre.org/>

<https://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/education/christian-distinctiveness/collective-worship/covid-19-resources>

<https://canterburydiocese.org/content/pages/documents/1589201827.pdf>

These materials are provided acknowledging that ideas from these websites have been used and adapted.

The Prayer Spaces website, in particular, has lots of ideas which you may also find helpful for your context, depending on what you feel is the most immediate need as your pupils, staff and families return to school. Remember that areas for prayer, reflection and spiritual refreshment are not only for the children but for every single person in the school community.

Make sure that the intention of the area is clear – the ideas below help with this. However, a set of 'wondering' or open questions can make all the difference to an interactive opportunity by providing a focus for thinking and a purpose for pausing.

Please consider carefully how you will ensure safety for all with any shared resources.

Refreshing Contents

Page 5	Rebuilding our school communities	People Tree Plasticine people Sharing Others first
Page 8	Rebuilding by remembering those who are no longer with us	Remembrance ribbons Beads of loss Empty Chair
Page 10	Rebuilding by Reflecting on our time spent apart	Under my umbrella Thankful playdough Prayer wall Gratitude
Page 12	Rebuilding friendships	Friendship flowers Love heart prayers
Page 13	Rebuilding by Renewing our minds spiritually and mentally	Hope blossoms Please beads Forest hope Clay pot prayers Journey
Page 16	Rebuilding by offering Reassurance to those who are anxious	Calm jar Stress less Forest Hammocks Weightlifting worry Bubble prayers

Rebuilding our school communities

People Tree

Setting up

You need a small tree, or large branch, a tree stand or you could buy or make a free-standing cardboard 'tree', pictures of empty photo frames attached to card, hole-punches, string or you could use cut-out people and pegs



Invitation

This activity encourages pupils of all ages to think about someone that they know and to pray a simple prayer for them if they want to. Place the tree at an edge of the prayer space and ensure that it is tightly secured to the floor (or even a wall). At the base of the tree place the empty photo frames, pens, holepunch(es) and string (or cut-out people-shapes and pegs). Encourage the pupils to think about the people that they know in school for a few moments. Invite them to draw a person into the photo frame and to then write a simple thought or prayer (something positive) on the back, if they want to. Encourage the pupils to attach it to the people tree.

Suggested words:

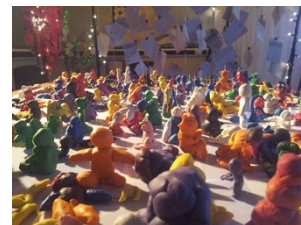
Think about the different people that you know: family, friends, teachers, other students at school. Think about one person. Maybe someone you really like. Maybe someone that you find hard to get on with. Draw a picture of the person. If you want to, you can write a thought or prayer - something positive and encouraging - for the person on the back, and then attach it to the People Tree.

I Corinthians 12:20: There are many parts, but only one body.

Plasticine people

Setting up

You will need a large board or tray, plasticine (various colours), table, chairs



Invitation

This activity encourages pupils to think about themselves in the context of the communities that they are a part of. Put the board and coloured plasticine in the middle of a table. Surround the table with chairs so that at least 4 or 5 pupils can use the activity at the same time. Make sure it's not too crowded so that the pupils can mould the plasticine easily. Before they begin making a plasticine person, encourage the pupils to think about their school community - what is it? Ask them to think about the plasticine people already on the board (make a few before the first group to get it started) - where do they think their 'place' in the community is? Invite them to make a plasticine model of themselves and to place it somewhere on the board. This activity works best with a team member alongside to guide the pupils.

I Corinthians 12:20: There are many parts, but only one body.

Sharing

Setting up

You will need 'Sharing a Shell' by Julia Donaldson, shells of all sorts, but including a large whelk shell, shiny blue and green paper to create a rock pool, rocks and sandpaper, card cut-outs of sea creatures taken from the book illustrations, empty ice-cream tub or yoghurt carton and paper cup, words that say: What will you share today?, glitter pens



Invitation

Read the story, and talking about the experiences and feelings of characters in the book. Talk about the advantages of the creatures living and working together. Explore the different types of shells in the rock pool, noticing shells which might make a good home for small creatures. Explore together how everyone can be made to feel part of the class and ways in which all can help and support each other to create a peaceful and happy class/community and a welcoming 'home' for a large number of people. Show the cut-out sea creatures and ask them to suggest ways in which they share in the classroom, both the resources and their own gifts/contributions. Write children's suggestions on the creatures, e.g., friendship, help, tidying up, sharing toys, including a class member in a game, sharing equipment, etc., and demonstrate how these can be concealed in the large shell. What will the pupils do? Select an appropriate word or phrase written on a creature, or take a blank one to write their own kind of sharing on it and decorate their creature with glitter pens before placing in the large shell(s).

Dear God, help us to see ways in which you would like us to share and help each other, so that our class may be a place of peace and love where everyone is welcome. Amen.

I Corinthians 12:20: There are many parts, but only one body.

Others first

Setting up

You will need a wooden cross the larger the better,
pebbles or stones at least one per pupil,
large dish or tray for the pebbles or stones,
an image of empty shelves



Invitation

When we are worried about something it is easier to think about what we need and forget what other people need. During lockdown, people bought lots of toilet rolls and pasta, which meant that other people were not able to buy any. If everyone had only bought what they needed, there would have been enough to go around.

Take a stone and hold it as you remember times when you have wanted to put yourself first. Think about putting others first in the future. Think about how you will do that when you are back in school. When you are ready lay the stone on the cross or on the plate as a sign that you want to put other people first.

Adults should be aware that pupils may want to talk about their worries about food shortages. For some families this may be a problem.

Mark 12:31: Jesus said: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.'

Rebuilding by Remembering those who are no longer with us

Remembrance Ribbons

Setting up

Use a quiet space with a large 'cargo' net or something similar, strips of ribbon in light/bright colours, pens, laminated images of what has been happening over past weeks (be sensitive about which images you choose)



Invitation

This activity invites pupils to reflect on what has happened recently, and it gives them an opportunity to express their feelings about this. In particular, this activity invites pupils to think about the people who were or are involved. Invite pupils to look at images provided. You may wish to have a staff member alongside to talk with pupils.

You might ask :

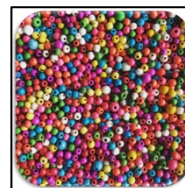
Who has been affected? Who has been helping? What do you hope or wish or pray for those involved? Invite pupils to choose one of the three coloured ribbons and write or draw a hope, a wish or a prayer for the person or people that they are reminded of, and tie it onto the cargo net.

Philippians 1:3: I thank God every time I remember you.

Beads of Loss

Setting up

Use a quiet space, string and beads with holes in



Invitation

This activity focusses on grief.

It encourages pupils to remember that they are not alone in grief and to think of others who may be grieving. It aims not to minimise the grief of a pupil but to enable them to remember that family members and friends will also be experiencing similar feelings during a time of loss. Pupils can take a piece of string and think of others who are grieving in a similar way to themselves or someone they know who is grieving. As they think of different people they can add a bead to their string. If they want they can pray for comfort, healing and love for those who are grieving. They can then tie the string around their wrist to take home as a reminder of those people.

You might explain as follows:

When someone leaves or dies they leave a gap in our lives - we miss them. It's called grief. It's easy to feel alone when you are grieving. But others may be grieving too. Take a piece of string. As you hold your string, think about other people who might be missing someone; they might be missing the same person as you. Add a bead to your string for each person you know who is grieving. If you want to, you can say a prayer for them. You could turn your string into a bracelet or hang it somewhere at home to remind you of the people you've been thinking about.

I Corinthians 13:8: Love never ends.

Empty Chair

Setting up

Use a quiet space with a chair, string, labels or paper and pegs or post-it notes, pens, a box of tissues.



Invitation

This activity encourages pupils to think about someone who is missing, and gives them a safe place to express how they feel. It could, therefore, be used in a school community which has suffered a bereavement. Put the chair on a carpeted area, or surround it with the cushions. Make the chair look special with some fabric or spotlights. Then put the labels or post-it notes and pens on the floor beside the chair. On page three there is a poem that you might like to print out and use. This activity works best if there is an adult nearby who is ready to listen to the pupils if they want to talk. It is also a good idea to have a box of tissues handy.

You might explain as follows:

When someone that we love leaves or dies, they leave a gap in our lives. We miss them. Is there someone that you miss? If you want to, you can write the name of the person onto one of the labels and attach it to the chair. Say a quiet thank you for the good memories that you have of them. If you want to, you can talk with God about your sad feelings too. Take your time. It might be helpful to talk to an adult afterwards.

I Corinthians 13:8: Love never ends.

More ideas

There are further ideas on p 43-48 of Journeying with and alongside those who are grieving: A support pack for schools

<https://canterburydiocese.org/content/pages/documents/1589201827.pdf>

Rebuilding by Reflecting on our time spent apart

Under My Umbrella

Setting up

You need an umbrella, something to suspend the umbrella (securely) from, carpet, string, pegs, paper, pens



Invitation

An umbrella covers us and keeps us dry. It protects us. This activity encourages pupils to think about times when they've felt vulnerable and have been looked after or protected by others which is what has been happening over the past weeks. Pupils are invited to sit under the protection of the umbrella. If they want to, they can write or draw something about the person who has looked after them or protected them, as a way of saying thank you.

Psalm 46:1: God is our protection and our strength. He always helps in times of trouble.

Thankful Playdough

Setting up

You will need playdough or plasticine, mats, trays.



Invitation

This activity encourages pupils to be grateful for all the good things about the past weeks and also the good things that they are looking forward to experiencing again. Encourage the pupils to think about someone or something that they are thankful for or any other relevant ideas that come to mind. When they have thought of something, encourage them to make a model of it. If your prayer space is in a carpeted room, use the mats to mark out an area. It is best to keep the playdough on trays if possible.

You might explain as follows:

Think about all the good things in your life. Think of someone or something that you are really grateful for. Use some of the playdough to make a model of the thing you have thought of. If you want to, while you are making your model use the time to say thank you to God.

Ephesians 5: 20: Always give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer Wall

Setting up

Find a large flat space (it might be a notice board or a window) with paper and pens. You could theme the area a little with quotes about prayer from famous people from the past or celebrities of today.



Invitation

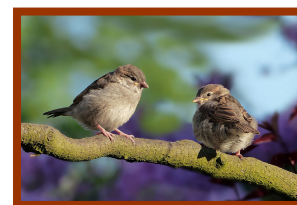
Add any prayers that you wrote whilst you could not come to school onto our wall or write a prayer about that time reflecting on how you feel now that you are able to back in school, together as a community. It is a good idea to check these offerings to make sure that they are appropriate or if they need to be followed up.

I Thessalonians 5:17: Never stop praying

Gratitude

Setting up

You will need a jug of summer flowers, some photos of signs of summer such birds and flowers, paper bird or flower shapes, pens, dish for collecting the completed prayers or a large sheet of paper to stick them onto (also glue stick)



Invitation

Arrange the jug of flowers as a focal point. Add photographs of signs of summer if you have them. If you look outside you will possibly see flowers, birds and other living things. Ask the pupils what other good things they have seen in the world whilst they have been at home and also as they have been back in school. It is good to stop worrying and think about the good things in the beautiful world around us. In the Bible Jesus said that God cares for the birds and made wildflowers and weeds look beautiful. If he cares for the birds how much more he cares for us.

On a bird or a flower shape write or draw something good that you have seen in creation. You might like to make it a prayer. Put your picture or prayer into the dish or stick it onto the large piece of paper.

Adults should be aware that pupils may want to talk about their worries and find it difficult to find positive things to thank God for, depending on their personal circumstances. Gently encourage them to find one good thing to notice, it will help them.

Some suggested words

If we look outside, we can see signs of summer. What have you seen in the world around you that is good this week? Take a bird or a flower shape and on it write a thank you prayer or draw a thank you picture of something that is good. Then put your thank you prayer or thought into the dish.

Matthew 6:26: Jesus said, '....your heavenly Father feeds the birds. And you know that you are worth much more than the birds.'

Rebuilding friendships

Friendship Flower

Setting up

You need a large board or wall space, brightly coloured card, blu-tack or a stapler, pens, friendship quotes



Invitation

This activity encourages pupils to think about the friendships that they are grateful for, those they have missed and those that they can now experience once again. Place a small heart-shape on the wall space or on a large table where the flower can take shape. This will be the centre, so make sure there is plenty of space around it, and that pupils will be able to reach it. Cut up the coloured card into petal shapes, big enough for pupils to write or draw their prayer on, and put with some pens and pins/staplers/blu-tack. Put a few quotes about friendship nearby to give pupils some inspiration as they think about those people for whom they wish to give thanks. Encourage the pupils to think about their friends, those who share their joy and happiness but also their difficulties. If they want to, they can write a first name onto the petal-shape, and a short thank you prayer for that person, and then attach it to the flower.

Possible words:

What makes a good friend? If you want to, write the first name of a friend that you are thankful for and that you might have been missing, and then write or draw a short thank you thought or prayer for them. Then add it to the Friendship Flower.

Romans 1:8: First I want to say that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you.

Love Heart Prayers

Setting up

You will need Love Heart sweets, bowl (or jar, basket), table



Invitation

This activity is a fun way to encourage pupils to pray for important people in their lives especially their friends. Set up the table and fill the bowl with the Love Heart sweets. Encourage the pupils to think of someone important in their life as they take a Love Heart sweet, perhaps a friend that they haven't seen for a long time. As they eat the sweet, the pupils can pray a silent 'thank you' prayer for that person if they want to. This activity works best in a clearly visible area of the room and with a staff member close by, so that pupils are less tempted to just eat lots of the sweets!

Colossians 1:3: In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rebuilding by Renewing our minds spiritually and mentally

Hope Blossoms

Setting up

You will need a shallow water paddling pool, water, paper squares, pens or pencils, waterproof mat/sheeting



Invitation

This activity encourages pupils to think about their hopes and dreams afresh, especially those associated with school. Put the water-filled pool within an area away from walkways and plug sockets. Outside is probably best, but if the prayer space is inside, you will need a waterproof mat or sheet underneath the pool to collect any spills. Put the pens and paper nearby. Encourage pupils to think about their hopes and dreams and to write or draw them in the middle of the paper squares. Ask them to fold each corner into the centre, until all four corners are touching in the centre - young children might need some help with this. Encourage them to carefully place their folded square onto the surface of the water, with the folded corners facing upwards. And then wait. Encourage the pupils to think about how they feel as they watch their 'hope prayer' slowly blossoming. This activity works best with a team member alongside.

Jeremiah 29:11: I know what I have planned for you," says the Lord.

Please beads

Setting up

A beautiful bowl, probably not glass, a big tub of glass pebbles, maybe different colours. (Please be aware that these are a choking hazard).



Invitation

This activity gives pupils the space and time to think about how they pray to God and how God hears their prayers. Encourage pupils to take a glass bead and hold it in their hand. Suggest they think about prayer, have they ever prayed before? How do they feel about prayer? Can they pray now? Remind the pupils that this is a safe space to pray, if they want to. That no matter how big or small their prayers might be God is always listening and always hears. Once they've prayed place the bead back in the bowl with everyone else's prayers.

Revelation 5:8 '...They held gold bowls filled with the prayers of God's people.'

Forest Hope

Setting up

Small wooden disks with a hole drilled through the top, coloured pens, string (biodegradable to leave the disks in the woods)



Invitation

Media reports often focus on bad things and sad things in the world. We have had a lot of that in the last few weeks. It's easy to feel overwhelmed when we see and hear these things all the time. This activity encourages pupils to look and listen for good things, and to hope for a positive future. It uses the forest setting as a location and it invites pupils to think about their hopes for the world.

Suggested words:

There are lots of bad and sad things in the world. But there are lots of good things too! What's good in your life? What's good in the world? What are you hoping for? If you want to, you can choose a wooden disk. Draw a picture of the world on one side. Then, on the other side, draw or write your thoughts or prayers for the world.

Genesis 1:31: God looked at everything he had made, and it was very good.

Clay Pot Prayers

Setting up

Modelling clay, play dough or plasticine, table cover



Invitation

This activity encourages pupils to think about situations where they feel under pressure, and how they respond. Cover a table with a mat to protect it, and lay out the modelling clay. You might want to find and display some encouraging quotes from well-known people or from the Bible that talk about pressure. As the pupils begin to shape their modelling clay, encourage them to think about times when they feel under pressure (maybe in the last few weeks). Sometimes you feel under pressure because bad things are going on, and you need to talk to someone about it. But sometimes pressure can be good for you, because it helps to bring the best out of you, and it helps to shape you in good ways. Encourage the pupils to reflect on this.

Suggested words:

Sometimes you feel under pressure because bad things are going on. When bad things are going on, you need to talk with someone who can help you. But sometimes pressure can be good for you. Pressure can help to bring the best out of you, and it can help to shape you in good ways. If you want to, use the clay to mould a pot. Think about the things that have shaped you in good ways.

II Corinthians 4:7: We have this treasure from God. But we are only like clay jars that

Journey

Setting up

You will need lots of different images or photographs, black and white photocopies, several of each image, pens



Invitation

This activity encourages pupils to think about where they are at this point in their life, following a period that has made lots of people stop and think about this question - whether they are happy, and where they would like to be later in life. You will need to collect lots of different images which provoke different emotions. For example, images showing happy faces, desolate landscapes, sad cartoon characters, lonely people, include some abstract images and pictures of mazes, crossroads or signposts. You can use photographs which you have taken, or you can search for images online. It is best to find copyright free images. Laminate the images and take photocopies of each one. You need several copies of each, in case lots of pupils choose the same one. Encourage the pupils to look at all the images and choose the one which best sums up how they feel. They then write their thoughts on the back of a photocopy. Reassure them that no one else will read what they have written and display them image side up.

Suggested words:

Life is like a long journey. There are many stages and seasons to go through. Look at all the images and decide which one best describes where you are at the moment. How does this image describe how you feel? Is this where you want to be? If you need to change direction, how will you do that? If you would like to, take a copy of your chosen image and write your thoughts on the back. No other pupil will read what you have written.

Joshua 1:9: So don't be afraid. The Lord your God will be with you everywhere you go."

Rebuilding by offering Reassurance to those who are anxious

Calm Jar

Setting up

Jar (a thick jam jar with a good lid), water, glitter, glycerine, food colouring

Mix the ingredients together to create a calming jar of glitter.

Do this before the activity:

half fill the jar with glycerine, top it up with water to within 10mm of the top. Add some glitter and a tiny amount of food colouring. At this point put the lid on and give it a shake. Add more glitter or colouring if need be, but try not to add too much colour as will obscure the effect. Finally add a tiny drop of washing up liquid; this breaks the surface tension so that the glitter doesn't cling to the surface of the water, but don't add too much or it will be frothy. Top up with water or glycerine to about 5mm from the top of the jar. When you are happy with the effect ensure the lid is screwed on securely. You might want to use some strong tape around the join.



Invitation

What are the things on your mind at the moment? Pick up the jar and shake it. Watch the glitter swirl around and settle at the bottom. Imagine the things on your mind slowly settling down.

Psalm 46:10 'Be still and know that I am God'.

Stress Less

Setting up

You will need aqua beads, bowl/tray



Invitation

Pupils worry and stress about all kinds of things, real and imagined, at home and as school. We have just been through a particularly stressful period. This activity encourages pupils to think about the things that worry them or the things they feel stressed about, and to imagine the worry or the stress slipping away. Place aqua beads into a large bowl, make sure it is a deep bowl enough to submerge pupil's hands in. Suggest that pupils run the Aqua Beads through their fingers. As pupils hold the beads in their hands encourage them to think about the problems slipping away. Remind pupils that this won't remove or cause the problem to disappear but that it is to help them not worry as much and stress less.

I Peter 5:7: Give all your worries to him, because he cares for you.

Forest Hammocks

Setting up

2/3 hammocks securely hung between trees

OR 2/3 free-standing hammocks

Invitation

Pupils (like most adults) live incredibly accelerated, busy lives, and they fill any 'down time' with even more activity on social media. However, pupils often say that stillness activities are their favourite in prayer spaces. They want to be still, but don't know how to. This activity encourages pupils to spend a couple of minutes in a hammock on their own, just being still. In the hammocks, they are encouraged to rest, to breathe slowly, to focus on themselves and listen to the forest noises. There should also be a leader nearby to lend a hand should it be needed.



Psalm 46:10: Be still and know that I am God

Weightlifting Worry

Setting up

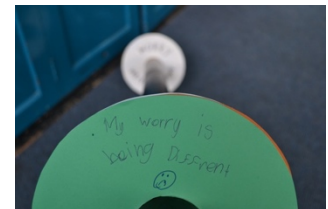
You will need long cardboard tubes, thick cardboard, cut into 'weight' shapes, pens

Invitation

This activity encourages pupils to think about what is weighing them down and if they want to, to ask God for strength to lift it. Make lots of cardboard weights with holes in the middle that fit onto the cardboard tubes. Place the tubes and weights, together with the pens, in an area of the prayer space away from other activities. Encourage the pupils to think about one thing that is worrying them and to write in onto one of the weights. These weights are then fitted onto the ends of the tube and pupils are invited to weight-lift their worries if they want to, as an act of prayer, asking God to give them strength. You might want to mention that sometimes our worries feel big and heavy, and when they do, it's good to talk with a trusted adult (teacher, parent, etc.) about them, to help us to lift them. Also, it is a good idea to have more than one set of weights so that someone can be writing down their worries whilst someone else is lifting theirs.

Suggested words

We all worry about things. Worries can make us sad, and they can weigh us down. Are you worried about something? If you want to, you can write a worry onto one of the cardboard weights and then add it to the tube. As you 'weight-lift' it, maybe you could ask God to give you strength, and courage to talk with someone too. When you feel worried, it's good to talk about your feelings with a trusted adult, a parent or a teacher



I Peter 5:7: Give all your worries to him, because he cares for you.

Bubble Prayers

Setting up

A few bottles of children's party bubbles, a box of tissues, a large floor space (ideally outside), a table, plastic sheets



Invitation

This could be used as a way of letting go of worries that they might be holding on to after a few weeks at home in unusual circumstances. Encourage the pupils to think about something that they are worried about. It could be anything that has happened recently or worries about being in school again. Invite the pupils to 'blow their worries away' as they blow a stream of bubbles into the air.

1 Peter 5:7 "Cast all your worries onto God because he cares for you."