**Rebuilding Community: Sharing your story**

*There is an accompanying PowerPoint for this assembly*

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| **Age range:** Primary |
| **Theme:** *This is one of several different options for this specific time in your school community’s life. 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. Collective worship may not be the time to deal with children’s specific worries and concerns, so you may need teaching staff to do this sensitively within the context of their safe classroom environment – whatever this looks like! This resource is not designed to cause worry in your school community, but to give you a range of responses that might help children understand the current context and feel more empowered.* ***This script continues the story about Nehemiah’s Big Rebuild from the Bible and helps children to reflect on their lockdown experiences. Much of the wellbeing guidance suggests that giving children time to share their individual experiences of lockdown will help them to adjust as things get back to more of a ‘normal’.*** |
| **Resources:** * The PowerPoint slides are numbered with a point in the script so you can find your way, and the bits in bold show you where to click on to activate the next slide or animation.
* You will need a piece of paper for each child, so that they can each make a ‘scroll’ for the reflection. Later on, they will add their own ‘stories’ to their scroll and could make it look old with a squeezed-out teabag. You will need to work out whether your children will need help to roll their scroll & whether this is best done outside of the assembly time. It certainly needs to be done AFTER children have written on their scrolls to reduce frustration! If you want to make your scroll rolled like the Torah, tape a stick or pencil on each short side, then roll the scroll up from each side, around the pencil and into the middle. **Do take plenty of time to tell the stories to each other as well!**
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| **Gathering:*** **Slide 1:** Use your usual gathering greeting to welcome your school community
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| **Engaging:*** **Slide 2:** Last week,we thought abouthow our school community is a bit like a jigsaw puzzle. [If time allows, let children share their thoughts from last time]
* **Slide 3:** We heard the beginning of the story of Nehemiah’s Big Re-Build, and we thought about how we, like some of God’s people in the story, are back together again, while part of our school community is still not with us. Like the people, we are getting our school and our hearts ready for the time when we will all be back together again. We are **Rebuilding Our Community (slide 4)**
* **Slide 5:** In today’s part of the story, we hear how Ezra the teacher read to God’s people from the special scroll – which some of you may remember is called the Torah – and we are going to make our own scrolls as part of our reflection time…. So let’s find out how **Nehemiah’s Big Rebuild** is getting on and hear what was read from the scrolls…. …and how those words helped to re-build the peoples’ hearts. [use script]
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| **Slide 7: Responding (and words for worship):** …We’ve been thinking today about the story of Nehemiah’s rebuild ….….how the memories the people shared made them both sad, and happy….(and both feelings are OK!....)…the words that Ezra read from the Torah helped to rebuild the peoples’ hearts….….the great stories of their past helped them to remember who they were….….and it reminded them of who God was as well, and how he’d always cared for them….….the words also gave them a reason to celebrate….….Nehemiah wrote in his story that there had never been a celebration like it!....…..I wonder why?.....We’re going to pause now and I’m going to pray using some of the words that the people prayed as they celebrated together. If you want to, you can make this your prayer as well….**[words also in PPT)****‘God, Blessed be your wonderful name. Your name is more wonderful than all blessing and praise. You are the only Lord. ….You give life to everything. Because of your mercy, you saved us again and again.** **You were patient with us for many years. ....our God, you are the great and mighty and wonderful God.** **You keep your agreement of love.’ [Slide 8] AMEN***[Nehemiah 9:5-6, 28, 30 & 32 ICB]***Slide 9: Sharing our stories**….we’ve all been apart for the last few months…..….I wonder what’s been important to you during lockdown?....….I wonder which words have been important to you in this time?....….I wonder what stories *you* might share with others about your lockdown experiences?....….take some time to write or draw your thoughts onto your scroll…. *[then roll them up – Torah-style if you can!]* |
| **Sending: Sing a song that reminds children of what’s important to your school, or is a part of your school’s ‘story’** |

**Nehemiah and the Big Rebuild (Part Two)**

***Slide 6:*** *To help children to engage: every time you hear the word* ***‘hearts’*** *make a heart shape with your hands*

As we heard last time, Nehemiah was not a builder: he was the cup-bearer to the King of Babylon, who had been sent to Jerusalem to rebuild the city, the home of the people of God. Most of God’s people had been living far, far away from home, in a land called Babylon. Their **hearts** had not forgotten about Israel, their ‘home’, but the people had never imagined that they would ever be able to return there.

The re-building of Jerusalem had taken seven months until there were homes for people to live in and some of them had returned from Babylon. But God, and Nehemiah, knew there was more work to do, that the people needed more than buildings and homes – they needed to remember who they were…..to re-build their **hearts**.

So Nehemiah gathered the people together – and Ezra the teacher read from the sacred scrolls containing the teachings of Moses. The people had not met together like this for a very long time, so long, in fact that they had almost forgotten what being together felt like. Their **hearts** were full of joy – and they worshipped God there together.

As Ezra read on, the people heard the stories of how God had been with them in the past: how he’d rescued them from Egypt and provided for them on their long journey to the land that God had promised them, their home. Their **hearts** were full of hope, as they remembered that God had been with them all this time.

They listened to Ezra read the rules that God had given to Moses many years ago and thought about what they meant, but then, suddenly, they realised how sad God must be that they had forgotten his rules….and as great big tears fell from their eyes, their **hearts** were filled with sadness. But God was using this sadness to help mend their broken **hearts;** to help the people to remember who they were and the things that should be important to them – the things that really mattered to God.

Nehemiah looked at the people and knew just what to do. ‘Don’t cry!’ he said. ‘This is a great day: a day for us to remember and be glad that we are God’s people. His joy will make your **hearts** strong!’ And he sent them home to eat, to drink, and to celebrate – and to share their food with those who were in need.

When they gathered the next day, the people heard how God had given them a way to celebrate that they were his people – and to remember his faithfulness on the long desert journey long ago, when they lived in tents. As God had told them to, they gathered branches from the trees – and built shelters on their rooftops, shelters in the courtyards and shelters in the grounds of the Temple. The people gathered up all their words of praise into a great prayer. Then they made promises to each other and to God and signed a charter to remind them of who they were, and what they had promised.

And as they celebrated, their **hearts** were rebuilt, just like the walls of the great city had been.

And God’s **heart** was very glad!