

Prayer and Reflection Resources for Staff Inset Days

Background

We first created this resource for use in September 2020 against the background of the pandemic. We have subsequently updated the materials to make them suitable for use in 'normal' years. The schools that have used the materials over the last two years reported that the impact on staff well-being was significant, with staff still referring to the activities in the summer term.

In addition to this set of reflective activities this team produce fortnightly reflective videos with prayer activities for school staff, they are posted on twitter by @ChrisCrazySci and on this webpage

<https://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/education/christian-distinctiveness/staff-reflections>

On this webpage you will find the videos and reflective activities created during the last year. They may well be relevant to your school staff.

About this resource

At the start of this academic year there are many practical details to organise. However, the well-being of the staff team is vital. This pack offers a menu of suggestions that schools could use to create an opportunity for processing what happened in the last school year and reflecting on hopes and fears for the future.

School leaders know their staff and so are best placed to decide which of the suggested prayer and reflection activities will be helpful for their team. Staff should be invited to participate in a way that makes them comfortable. We have suggested some activities that are simply an opportunity to slow down and reflect such as colouring and others that are prayer activities.

We know that some schools have successfully adapted these ideas for use with their pupils, you know which might work for them.

We hope that this pack is a blessing to your school community.

Rebecca Richardson Huyton Deanery Schools and Youth Worker

Chris Stafford Team Rector All Saints Church Newton-le-Willows Diocese of Liverpool

Jane Whittington Diocese of Guildford Schools Officer

Practical Details

Timing We suggest that you allow about an hour to an hour and a half for this session.

Set Up If you have time to make the reflective prayer area look inviting it will help the staff to feel valued and enhance the experience. Use tablecloths and drapes on the tables, you could use fairy lights running across the tables in a vase or hanging from the ceiling. Beautiful dishes or baskets to hold the materials all help to create a reflective area. This video may inspire you. <https://youtu.be/bpc-1ojx9HE>

If possible, use music and images on the screen to create an atmosphere. Suggestions are included below.

If possible, adapt the lighting to create a reflective atmosphere.

Some people like to use Reed diffusers or fragrance to create a multi-sensory experience.

Content As you choose the activities it may be helpful to see this session as a journey. Select activities that enable staff to mark these stages.

Past - provide an opportunity to:

- acknowledge the regrets, disappointments and losses of the last year.
- celebrate the achievements and good things that happened because of lockdown or despite lockdown.

Present - provide an opportunity to:

- acknowledge how staff are feeling now as they face this new year.
- pray for people or situations that they are worried about now.

Future -provide an opportunity to:

- reflect and pray about their role in school, and their new class.
- acknowledge their worries and hopes for this year.
- be aware that God is with them in all circumstances.

Images for your screen

You could start or end the session with the very moving UK Blessing filmed during lockdown.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUtl3mNj5U>

There is a version sung by children here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiWZXLsdE9w>

There is a signed version in Makaton here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=va048-XxFTI>

There is a global dance interpretation here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9bwQsqgkew>

Images to Download Singly

- **Engage Worship** (creators of the Tiny Advent Poems) <https://engageworship.org/ideas> Scroll down the search tool on the right to look for images.
- **Faith and Worship Memes** https://www.faithandworship.com/Prayer_pictures.htm#gsc.tab=0
- **National Geographic** <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/proof/2017/04/your-shot-unbelievable-landscapes/>
- **Pixabay** Free to use images enter www.pixabay.com into your browser (links never work)
- **Unsplash** Free to use images <https://unsplash.com/>

Images and Music

Landscape Background with Ambient Music video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UP8titLUN7Y>

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Music

Reflective Christian Background Music

Piano, flute and sounds of nature - *Tim Janis* <https://youtu.be/zwzOyq4iwOw>

Peaceful Gregorian Chants – *Dan Gibson* <https://youtu.be/k34G22ITqvE>

Taize Chants – For example <https://youtu.be/RuPcxLjVxtg>

Margaret Rizza’s music – this is an instrumental example

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cOUYskWIU>

Modern Worship Songs

Sing of my Father – *Urban Rescue* <https://youtu.be/m8dYLZVjwhA>

The Lord’s Prayer – *Hillsong Worship* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCxqjEz5hJ4>

Cornerstone - *Hillsong Worship* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izrk-erhDdk>

Be Still - *Hillsong Worship* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zcHHp0GTuc>

How Great is Our God - *Hillsong Worship* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FS-AR8peTY>

Who you say I am - *Hillsong Worship* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKw6uqtGFfo>

Through it All - *Hillsong Worship* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GthZbt1IPo>

Mighty to Save - *Hillsong Worship* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEAcs2B-kNc>

Broken Vessel (Amazing Grace) - *Hillsong Worship* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fiyYoe678yl>

Our Prayer - *Rend Collective* - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_e3jB7tF8s

Here I am to Worship - *Anthem Lights* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5sID2aSKKY>

Good, Good Father - - *Anthem Lights* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NhHzTq5wQQ>

Yes and Amen – *Anthem Lights* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyKfGApD53s>

What a Beautiful Name/Tremble – *Anthem Lights* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kvEUJab8cc>

Who you say I am – *Anthem Lights* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sp7V1HyZJhw>

Reckless Love/How He Loves Us – *Anthem Lights* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=US53Rn2AKHQ>

Yes I will – *Anthem Lights* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcJ-3MSTlw>

Waiting here for you – *Martin Smith* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3O6JIAKENk8>

Way Maker – *Leeland* - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJCV_2H9xD0

The Blessing *Elevation Worship* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZ55mDL7dA0>

Where Feet May Fail - *Hillsong UNITED* - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy9nwe9_xzw

10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord) - *Matt Redman* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXDGE_IRIOE

Who am I - *Casting Crowns* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rT8Re1EIQc>

Great are you Lord - *Casting Crowns* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZqV6i98SkA>

Reckless Love *Bethel Music* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sc6SSHuZvQE>

Or put on a Soaking Worship video. These are videos of quiet instrument music based on Christian songs, created to help you slow down and reflect.

Heavenly Harp Music - <https://youtu.be/Gg1wULT6eHw>

This one is 3 hours long. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xx1MjhzKcYw>

Reflective Colouring Pages

Here are some sources of reflective colouring that have a Christian element. Some include a Bible verse others are a picture to colour. Pencils are less harsh for reflective colouring than felt pens.

Colouring Faith.. A good mix of styles, some pages with text and some without

<http://coloringfaith.com/free-coloring-pages/>

Emily Kelly Designs. There are some specifically linked to the pandemic and plenty of other more general ones. Free to download as A4 pdfs.

<https://www.emilykellydesigns.com/colouring-in-sheets>

Frog and Gnome Cards, Gifts and Stationery_7 Free Bible Verse Colouring Sheets For Anxious Times.

There are two versions of these with varying amounts of detail.

<https://www.frogandgnome.com/collections/colouring-sheets/products/7-colouring-sheets-for-anxious-times?>

Jo Ditt Designs. A wide variety of free to download colouring pages.

<http://joditt.com/free-christian-coloring-pages-adults/>

Finger Labyrinths

On the next few pages are some finger labyrinths that you could print out and offer to people. They will also need some coloured pencils.

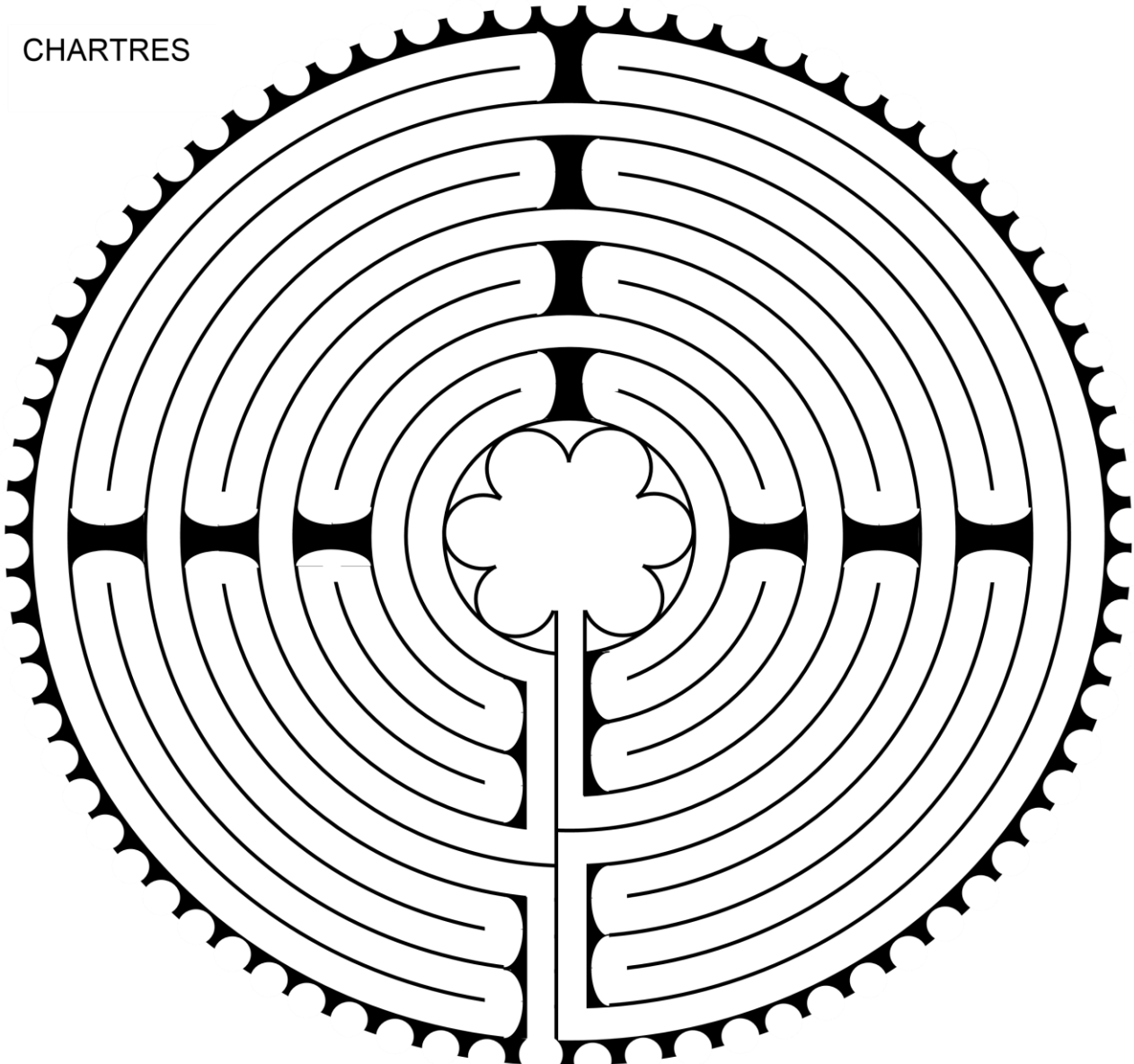
Labyrinths are ancient pathways found across the world. The winding path helps us to 'unwind', to let go and rest in God. Members of the early church as well as Medieval pilgrims have used them as a support for prayer. Today, labyrinths are being created in churches, retreat centres, schools, hospices and cathedrals to offer a spiritual space for prayer and reflection providing a stilling space in a busy world.

A labyrinth is different from a maze. A maze is full of dead -ends and designed to get you lost. A labyrinth has only one path that always leads to the centre... if you stay on the path you cannot get lost. There is no right or wrong way to a labyrinth... no set pace... just follow the path in your own time... Finger labyrinths can be used for prayerful reflection when it is not possible to walk a full-sized labyrinth.

You can find out more here <https://www.sheffield.anglican.org/UserFiles/File/PST/Finger-Labyrinth-and-Prayer-Guide-Leaflet.pdf>

Four Finger Labyrinths to print

CHARTRES



Colour in the labyrinth above using crayons, coloured pencils etc. Use as many colours as possible; this will make it easier for your eyes to follow your “walking” finger. Choose a walking finger and breathe smoothly. As you trace the path (from the outside opening at the bottom to the centre, move at whatever pace feels right for you. As you do so, you may opt to:

- a. Quiet your mind
- b. Pray for yourself or someone else
- c. Keep a question in mind and feel the question using your emotions

At the centre, pause and take several slow deep breaths (keeping your finger inside the centre or place your hands comfortably on your lap). When ready to leave the centre or feeling satisfied: (like after eating a good meal) retrace the path back out to the entrance (which now becomes the exit point). Upon leaving the labyrinth, be grateful and thankful for the opportunity to bring divine strength and insight back with you into your daily life.

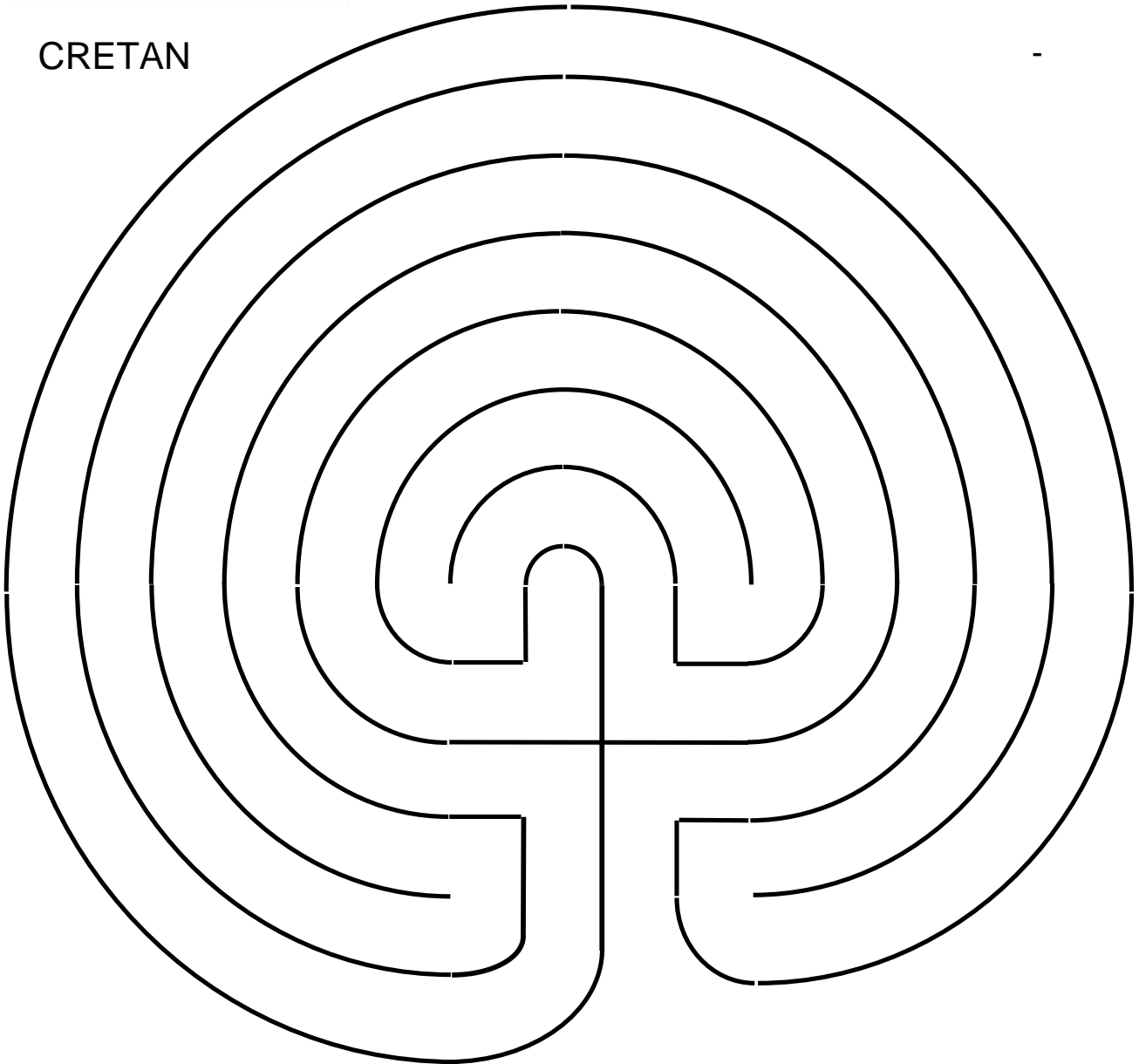
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CRETAN



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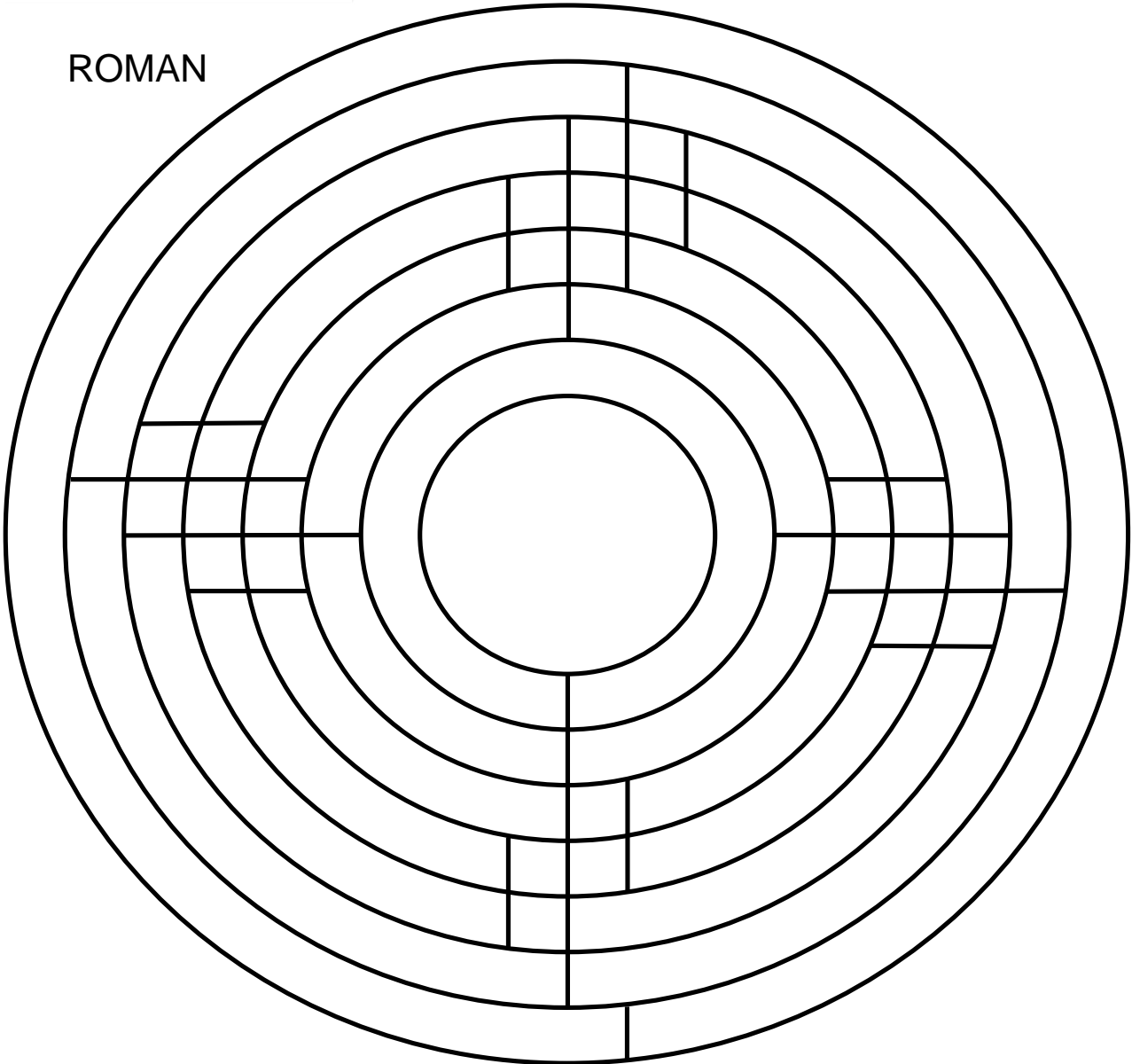
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ROMAN



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- h. Pray for yourself or someone else
- i. Keep a question in mind and feel the question using your emotions

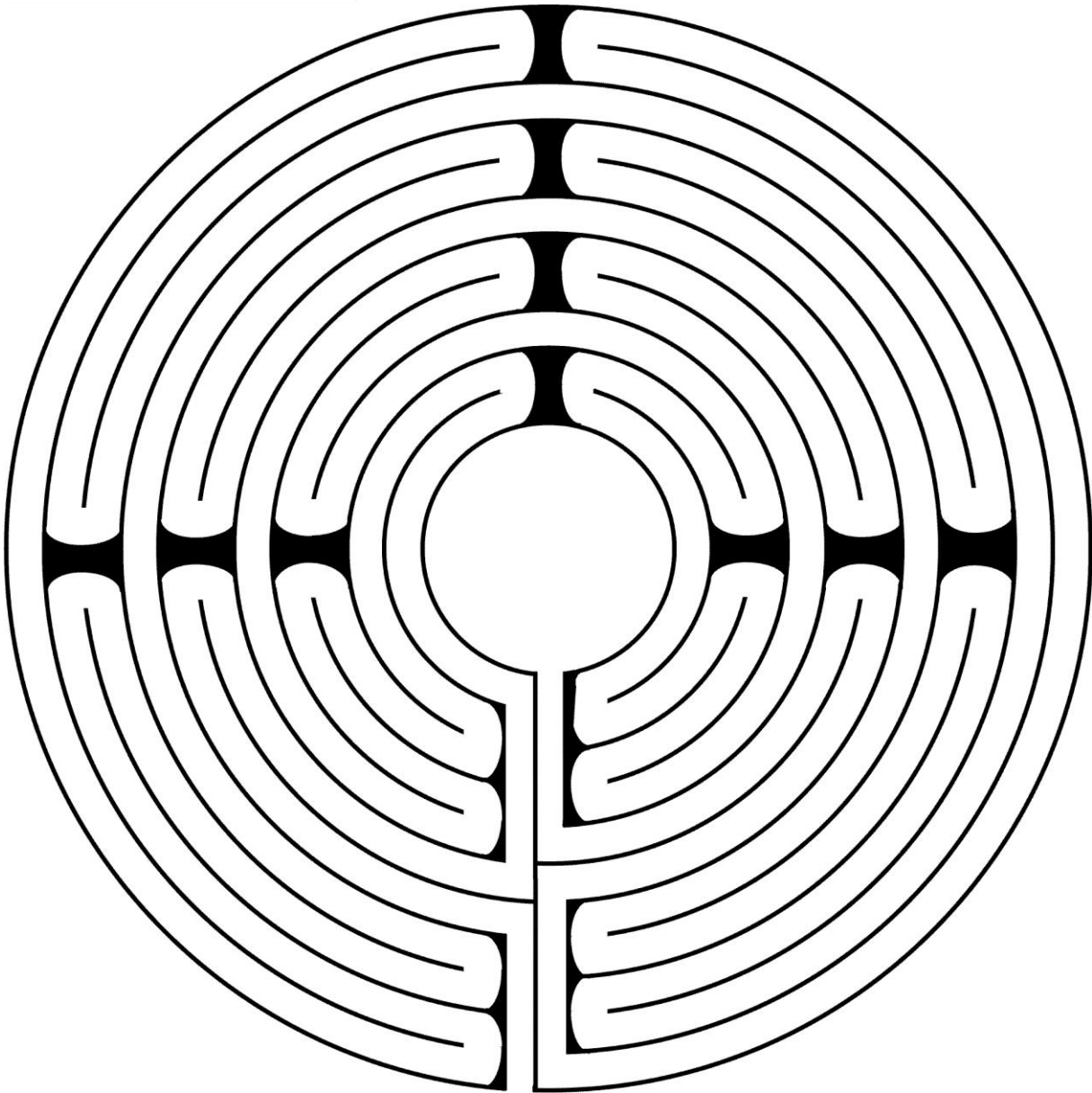
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Regret and Loss

*When you go through deep waters,
I will be with you.
When you go through rivers of difficulty,
you will not drown.
When you walk through the fire of oppression,
you will not be burned up;
the flames will not consume you. Isaiah 43:2*



This is an opportunity to reflect on the things that you wish had gone differently in the last academic year and then to give those feelings of regret and loss to God and leave them with Him.

Think back over the last academic year.

- *Is there anything that you think “I wish I had.....”?*

This could be something that you or your pupils missed out on because of the ongoing impact of Coronavirus; it might be an opportunity you didn't take, or something that you wish you had done differently.

- *Is there anything that you think “I wish I hadn't.....”?*

This could be something that you said, or something that you did.

- Think about these regrets and losses. You may want to pray about them, or you may prefer to spend some time acknowledging those feelings and thinking them through.
- When you have finished thinking or praying, take your piece of vitamin tablet and drop it into the clear water.
- Watch as it fizzes and dissolves.
- As you see the tablet get smaller, imagine that these are the things you regret or have lost watch them getting smaller as God helps to take them away. We can leave the regrets and losses of last year behind as we start this new school year.

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You need

- Effervescent vitamin tablets broken in half.
- One or two clear vases of water on the prayer station, or individual tall glasses of water

Achievements and Celebration

**This is the day the Lord has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it. *Psalm 118:24***



Think back over the last academic year. It was a challenging year, but many good things happened. What would you like to celebrate?

- **It might be something that appears insignificant to an onlooker, but it was an achievement for you or for one of your pupils.**
- **Maybe something that you did. Something new, something that you never thought you could do.**
- **Maybe something that a pupil or group of pupils did?**
- **Maybe something that you saw someone do for another person.**

Now

- **Write this achievement or celebration on a flag then decorate the flag with bright colours.**
- **Peg or staple your flag onto a bunting strip.**
- **Perhaps this bunting could stay in the staff room and you could add to it each week?**

You need

- Triangles cut from coloured paper
- Felt pens
- Some bunting tape, ribbon or washing line
- Clothes pegs or stapler

Tears and Sadness

Our Lord, we belong to you. We tell you what worries us, and you won't let us fall.

Psalm 55:22



These glass beads look a bit like tears.

Who do you know who is sad, or anxious?

Who are you worried about?

It may be a member of your family, a friend, a member of the school or church community, or someone else. Each of these people matters to God.

As you pray for them, or think about them, place a glass tear on the big tear drop. You are welcome to place as many glass tears for as many people as you wish.

You need

- Glass pebbles or beads. These are sold in supermarkets and garden centres.
- A large tear drop shape cut out of paper.
- Or you could use a large dish to gather the tears.

The Bottle of Tears

**“You’ve kept track of all my wandering and my weeping.
You’ve stored my many tears in your bottle—not one will be lost.
For they are all recorded in your book of remembrance.”**

Psalm 56 :8



The last few years have been difficult for everyone.

Things may have happened to you and to people that you love that have made you very sad.

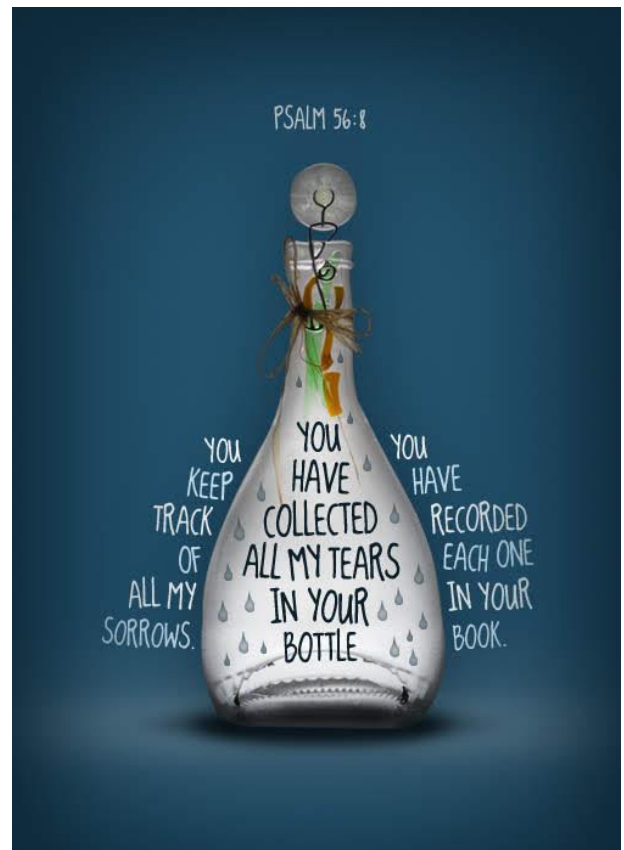
In the Bible it says that God cares about every tear that we cry.

You may find it helpful to put one of the paper tears into the bottle, as a sign that you are sharing that grief with God.

You need

- An attractive bottle.
- Tear shapes cut out of tissue paper
- I have an additional glass bottle with battery fairy light inside to decorate the station.
- You could print copies of this card for people to take away. Original is [here](#)

Search for images of Psalm 56:8 to find other cards.



God who Comforts us; God who helps us to comfort others.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

2 Corinthians 1: 3&4



This is an opportunity to pray for people you know who are sick, anxious, or bereaved.

Maybe you would like to remember someone who has died.

Light a tea light for each of these people as you pray for them, or as you think about them.

This light is to remind you of God's compassion and comfort coming into this dark situation.

The verses above say that God will comfort us so that we can comfort others, how might you comfort or support the people that you have prayed for?

You need

- Tea lights
- Matches and tapers
- A metal tray covered in a layer of sand.
or.
- Battery tea lights.

On My Heart

Give thanks to the God of heaven.

His love continues forever. Psalm 136:26



We sometimes say that a person 'is on my heart'. This is an opportunity to think about what is on your heart for next term.

Write your name on one heart.

On the other side write a few words to describe how you feel about the coming school year. Your hopes as well as your concerns.

On the other heart write the name of your class, your school, or a group that you will work with this term.

On the other side write a few words to describe your concerns, hopes or prayer for them for the coming term.

Hold both hearts in your hands and pray for your pupils and for yourself and know that God loves you and God loves your pupils.

You could keep your hearts in your school bag to remind you of God's love when you rummage in your bag during this term.

You need

- Two small heart shapes You could cut these from paper or buy wooden hearts that are sold cheaply for wedding decorations.
- Pens

God is right beside me

*I know the Lord is always with me.
I will not be shaken, for He is right beside me. Psalm 16:8*



None of us know what this year holds, but we do know that God is with us, right beside us, whatever happens.

We all face times that can be difficult and when we'd really like to know God is with us, or even times when we are on our own and feel lonely. God is always there, but sometimes it's hard to remember that when we can't see him!

Take a safety pin and pin it somewhere on your clothes as a reminder that God is always with you and keeps you safe. You might prefer to put it somewhere where no-one can see or you might have it on show as a potential talking point! You might even want to personalise the safety pin with a couple of beads or a small strip of ribbon!

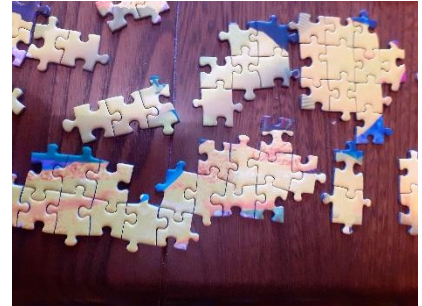
You need

- Some small safety pins
- You could provide some beads or ribbon to decorate the safety pins if people wish.

Joined Together

In the same way, we are many, but in Christ we are all one body. Each one is a part of that body. And each part belongs to all the other parts.

Romans 12:5



Our school community is like a jigsaw. Lots of small pieces make up the whole picture. When one piece is missing you notice straight away, the picture is not complete. When one person is missing the whole class or school notices.

Take a puzzle piece.

Look at the 'holes' in your puzzle piece – the bits where the lugs fit: Who is missing from your class or school community? Perhaps they are at home, maybe they have moved to a new school, or retired.

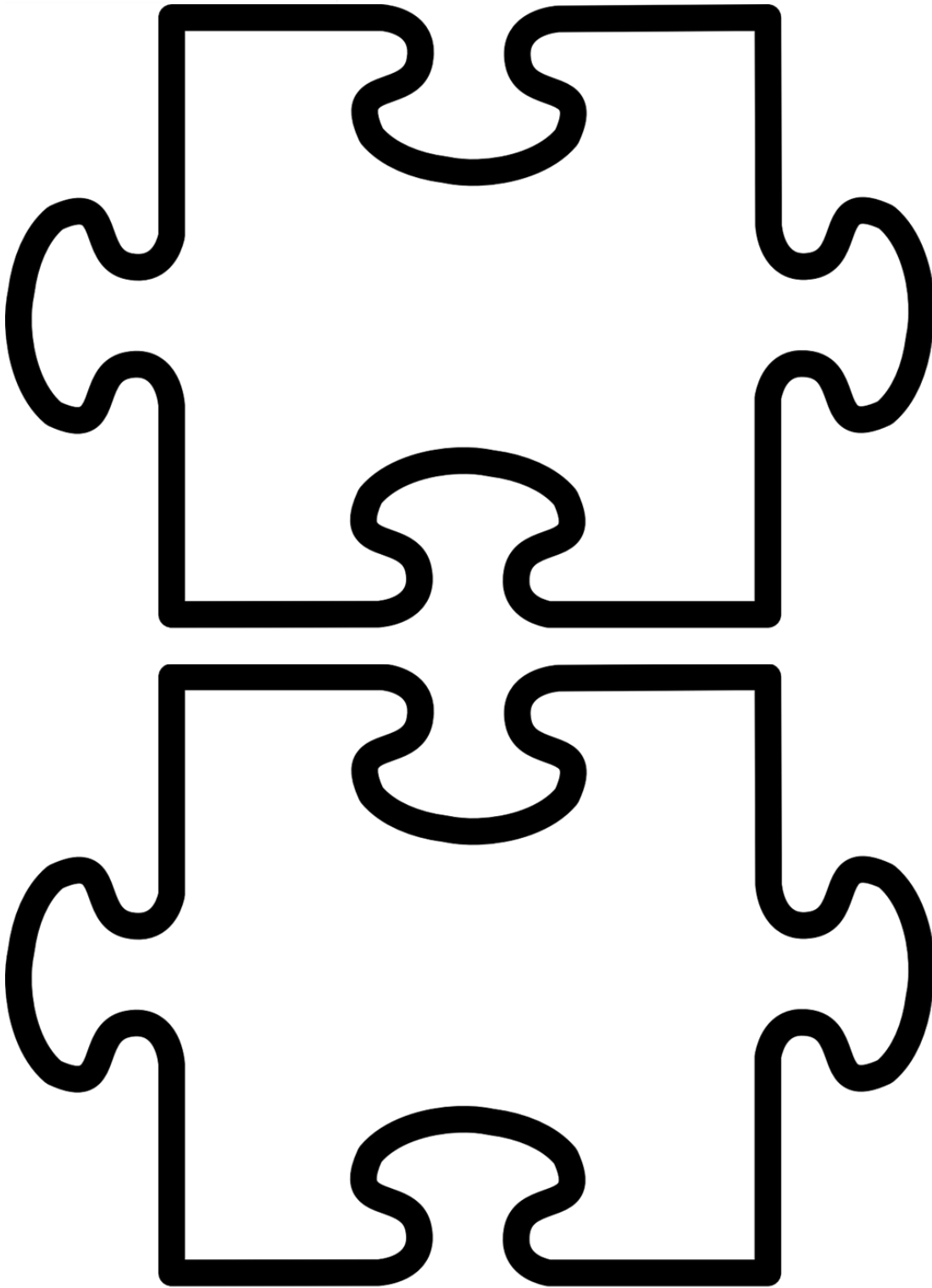
Hold them in your heart – and pray for them in the silence if you want to.

Now look at the 'lugs' on your puzzle piece – the bit that helps it to 'fit in' with other pieces: we all 'fit' somewhere in the puzzle, and it will take time to build it up again. Reflect on where you fit into the new jigsaw of this academic year. You may wish to pray about your role in school this year.

Lastly, look at the patterns or pictures on your puzzle piece: the piece of the puzzle that you hold is as unique as you: and each one of you matters, to your school community – and to God.

You need

- Jigsaw pieces from an old jigsaw, a blank jigsaw or printed and cut out. Template below.



I Am....

Thank you, God, that I am....

"Fearfully and wonderfully made" Psalm 139:14

"Made in God's image" Genesis 1:27



Look at the words around the person on the next page.

These words from the Bible describe how God sees you, the person he lovingly created.

Do any of these words remind you of you?

Now look at yourself in the mirror.

God made you in his image and you are unique and loved by him.

Look at God's description of you again.

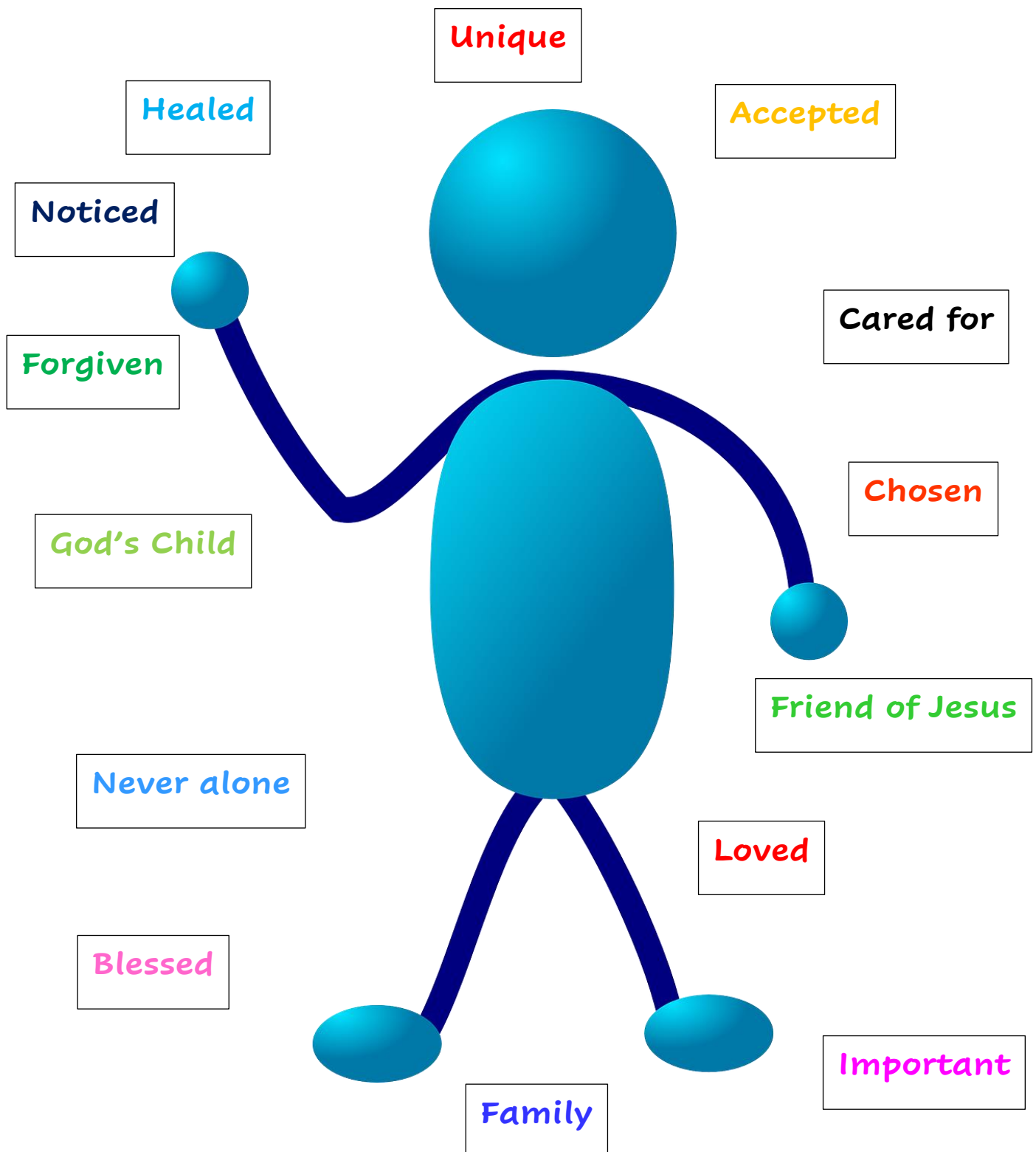
Let those words sink into your soul.

Choose one word or phrase to keep in your head today.

You need

- A printout of the next page
- A mirror, you could raid the science cupboard for these.

God says you are:



Make a Jar of Blessings

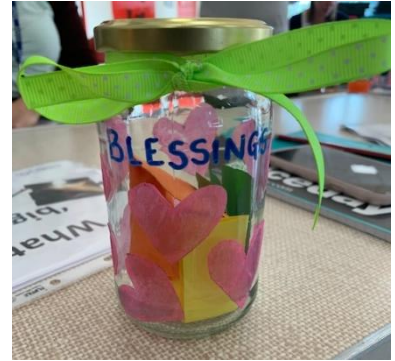
May the Lord bless you and keep you.

²⁵ May the Lord show you his kindness.

May he have mercy on you.

²⁶ May the Lord watch over you

and give you peace." Numbers 6:24-26



Decorate an ordinary jar, tin, or box.

It may help to label it 'Blessings Jar', 'Thankful Jar' or 'Gratitude Jar'.

Cut up slips of paper that can be folded to fit into the jar.

Keep your jar on your desk.

At the end of each day think of one thing that you can be thankful for that day. It could be as small as no wet playtimes today!

Write the good thing on the paper.

Put the paper in your jar.

When you are feeling down or have had a bad day, take one of the good things, the blessings, out of the jar and read it.

You could do this with your class as a group. Maybe putting a jar on each table at the end of each day.

You need

- A jar such as a large jam jar. Or you could use a tin or a box.
- Sharpie pens or pens that will write on glass
- Stickers, or self-adhesive ribbon to decorate your jar
- Small strips of paper

Danger, Sadness, Peace

With the ongoing war in Ukraine staff may wish to think about and pray for people who are in danger, people who are sad, people long for peace.

Equipment:

- You will need 30cm lengths of wool in red, white and blue.
- 3 baskets for the wool.

Instructions:

The coloured lengths of wool will be laid out in separate baskets with the explanation labels for each colour beside the basket.



Red the colour used on warning signs to show danger. As we plait with the red wool, we pray for those who are in danger.

Blue; feeling blue; represents sadness. As we plait with the blue wool, we pray for those who are sad.

White the colour of a dove represents peace. As we plait with the white wool, we pray for those people who live where there is war and long for peace.

Take one strand of each of the colours of wool and tie them together with a knot at one end.

Now slowly and thoughtfully plait the three colours together.

As you plait with the red wool pray for those who are in danger.

As you plait with the blue wool pray for those who are sad.

As you plait with the white wool pray for those people who live where there is war and long for peace.

When you have plaited the whole length, knot the ends together to secure it.

You may like to use this as a wristband or bookmark to remind you of the people you have prayed for.

There are more reflective prayer materials to help staff and pupils pray for Ukraine on the Prayer Spaces in Schools website here <https://prayerspacesinschools.com/product-category/prayer-activity/>