

## Reflective story telling – Notes from LTLRE 2019 – Thanks to Isla Ferguson

Telling religious stories as part of RE, based on innate human story telling.  
Can be used with any year group, right up to KS3.

Based on ideas from Godly Play; Montessori ideas developing spirituality and language based on Christian religion. 'Godly Play' refers to an imaginative approach to religious storytelling. It has roots in Montessori education practice and philosophy. It is an approach invites and enables children to participate for themselves in the exploration of collective and personal meanings found in religious stories.

Can be used for any religious story: The revelation of the Qur'an to Mohammed, parables, Hindu stories ...

### Essential elements/ procedure

- 1 Drawing in of the community. Children sit in a circle- seated circle, circle on chairs behind.
2. The setting should be prepared before the children come in.  
(Pre-teach vocabulary as necessary, or could leave until afterwards as part of learning, talking about who or what the characters are).
3. The props used to tell the story are special and prepared beforehand. Do not use toys from the classroom, etc. Handle the props with respect to show how special they are. Keep in a special container – bag or box. Have one for each story.

Props do not need to be expensive or even realistic. The disciples, for example, do not need to be realistic and expensive figurines; they could be peg dolls, chess pieces, buttons or beautiful pebbles. (Or lego figures, but in this case they should be special and separate from class lego.)

In the case of Muslim stories, it is important NOT to realistically represent humans and particularly not Mohammed, Allah or angels. A beautiful crystal in a special box could be used.

A bag / box of sand is very useful for Jewish/Christian/Muslim stories



Props for the Revelation of the Qur'an



Props to retell the Easter story



Props to tell the story of the Good Samaritan

Good sources of props: car boot sales, charity shops, craft fairs, the boxes that contained Christmas presents.... Build up a collection of artefacts to use, as well as beautiful containers and fabric.

4. Tell the story from a prepared script which you know; do not read the story. Scripts for Christian stories can be found in Godly Play publications.

As you tell the story, move the props to illustrate it. Move them slowly; embrace the time taken.

5. Do not look at children while telling the story - you are part of the story

6. When the story is finished, look up and ask I wonder questions: I wonder which part of the story you like the best? Which was the most important part? Accept all answers

7. As you put story away, do it slowly and carefully

### **Responses**

First response: Slightly structured response eg write something, paint something, use playdough. Have resources available and allow children to choose. It may take the children time to get used to the idea of choosing how to respond.

Could also have structured response in mind: writing, artwork, etc

### **Assessment**

Think about your assessment - what do you want to find out ? Knowledge of story, how it fits into their lives, comparison with other known stories, etc

Recall of facts: tell the story at the beginning of the unit then lay out elements at the end and talk about the story

Personal responses, big questions: Record verbal wondering, take photos of responses

## **An example of a story:**

Taken from:

[https://www.cofeguildford.org.uk%2Fassets%2Fdownloads%2Fdepartments%2Feducation%2Fpentecost\\_pause\\_day%2Freflective\\_story\\_pentecost.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0uOHKfAciTrcDWF5rEzFm5](https://www.cofeguildford.org.uk%2Fassets%2Fdownloads%2Fdepartments%2Feducation%2Fpentecost_pause_day%2Freflective_story_pentecost.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0uOHKfAciTrcDWF5rEzFm5)

Beneath is one possible way of retelling the events of Pentecost. Telling a story is a personal thing and you may well want to do it differently, with a different emphasis, using your own creativity.

I have split it into chunks, with a new action or prop for each chunk, to aid memory. Possible "I wonder..." questions are in italics.

### **Props that would be helpful:**

- A box that is fastened securely (doesn't look like it wants opening)
- A mat/cloth to tell the story on
- Characters (Jesus, a range of disciples, 'hearers' of the disciples in the street, 2 characters in white robes)
- A box (or similar) to represent a room
- A green cloth and small box for a hill
- Grey cloth for a street
- A candle and matches

### **Introducing the story**

Bring the story box to the middle of the circle. I wonder what sort of story is hidden in here? It looks rather like it has been shut away and does not want to be discovered. I wonder why that is? I'll open the box very cautiously in case there is something scary or dreadful inside. Fetch out the material/rug/cloth upon which you will tell the story. This story happened over 2000 years ago, just after Jesus' death.

### **Bring out the box**

Get out the disciples and place them inside the box. Here are some friends. Their best friend has just been arrested and killed brutally by the authorities so these guys are hiding. They are scared that they are going to be next. They're also grieving. Their friend was an amazing guy and they had each given up so much to follow him and be his close and special friends. And now he is dead. He had been the leader. What were they to do without him? They were so used to following along. Finger the disciples and move them around the room as you reflect: I wonder what questions and sad thoughts which of them was dwelling on as they stayed, hidden away in this room together? How would they make a living now?

### **Introduce Jesus**

Here's the dead friend. Only something very special and bizarre happened to him. He died, but then came back to life again. And he wasn't like a ghost. He met up with people and talked with them, and shared food with them. Lifting him into the room comment on how he appeared many times to his closest friends to reassure them and comfort them. This really messed with their emotions, and their understanding of the world and who their friend, their leader was. Turn the disciples to greet and react to Jesus. I wonder how this reappearance made these friends feel? Did it make them feel just happy or did it put them on edge at all or put questions in their minds?

### **Put down a small box and cover it with a green cloth (to represent a hill)**

One day they all set out from the room and walked out of the city into the nearby countryside and up a hill. I wonder what the friends were thinking as they walked? They had got used to having their leader back amongst them, but recently he had been saying some strange things that were hard to understand. Things that were a bit troubling. Keep moving the characters along and up the hill. He had told them that they were to wait in Jerusalem, the place they were afraid to be. He told them that they would receive power from on high, when God the Holy Spirit would

come upon them. It sounded like he might not be around for that much longer because he wanted them to be witnesses and tell people all the things they had seen and heard. But this was a frightening prospect when all they really wanted to do was hide. None of the friends wanted to die a nasty death like their leader had. And they couldn't help but think about that as they walked. I wonder what other memories of walks they had taken together flooded back? They had spent a lot of time over the last three years walking, and talking and sharing together.

### **Lift Jesus up and put him away back in the box**

Something very strange happened on top of the hill. Perhaps the friends should have expected it. After all, strange things had happened over the years on other hills. Once they had seen their leader feed 5000 people with only a few loaves and some fish. Another time they had seen him seem to shine in such an unnatural way, and then chat to Moses and Elijah - heroes of the faith who had died thousands of years beforehand. Anyway whether it was because of all the recent trauma or whatever, they simply hadn't thought to expect anything. Silly really. But all of a sudden he seemed to lift up and a cloud took him out of sight and was no longer there. Jesus, their friend, their newly alive friend was gone. Plain gone. And they hadn't even say goodbye properly!

### **Place two characters in white robes on the hill**

As the friends were standing, staring up into the sky, trying to make sense of it all, they suddenly became aware that two men had joined them. They too were looking up into the sky, but didn't seem surprised by the events. They asked the friends why they were looking up into heaven. They seemed to also know Jesus and said that one day in the future he would return in a very similar way to how he had left. It was all really rather mysterious. But then again, many of the things they had watched Jesus do had been mysterious. And always he spoke and acted with such confidence. There wasn't any point in hanging around on the hill so the friends turned round and headed back into the city, back to their room, their hideout. What did it all mean? What next? They still weren't popular in the city, so they decided it would be best to keep a low profile. Best to keep themselves to themselves whilst they waited to see what might happen next.

### **Place all the disciples back into the box representing the room**

One day as they were gathered together, the friends heard a sound like strong wind. (Blow on the scene.) But it wasn't outside, it seemed to come from nowhere and fill the whole room. And straight after (light a candle) it was followed by tongues of fire. It looked like the flames were settling on everyone's head. It was totally bizarre. Not in a scary way. Just in a way that was so unexpected and yet so right and so unbelievable. They turned to each other to talk and share the moment, the strangeness, but out came words of other languages. The words felt familiar, and yet where had they come from?

### **Lay down a piece of grey cloth to represent the street outside**

This wasn't something to keep to themselves. Suddenly the sadness and the pain of the previous weeks, the fear and the wondering all seemed to make sense and find its right place. A new sense of peace and purpose washed over each of the friends. Outside a crowd was gathering in the street. (Start setting more characters on the street.) The friends went out to meet them and explain, each still speaking in the new language they had been given. It was a strange gathering in the street. People were there from countries across the world because they were in the city for the festival celebrations that were happening. Each person could hear one of the friends talking in their language. It didn't make sense but was wonderful nonetheless. And as Peter spoke, explaining what the friends had all seen and heard and been a part of during the past few years, things started to make sense to the listeners. That day, many more people joined the friends and became worshippers of God with them. Pause.

***I wonder... I wonder which part of the story had you most excited?***

***I wonder which part of the story you would have most wanted to be present for and see for yourself?***

***I wonder which part of the story you find most difficult to believe and why? I wonder what questions this story has left you wanting to ask?***