

Valentines – ideas for collective worship/family service

Activity

In a school collective worship

Introduction

Depending on the size of the group and the context, these questions can be asked on a rhetorical basis or with the option for people to share their answers with a small group or everyone

- What thing in your bedroom/house do you love the most? i.e. the photo of my children, my teddy, etc.
- What sensation/feeling do you love the most? i.e. dewy grass on bare feet, clean sheets, stroking my dogs ears, etc.
- What treat do you love the most? i.e. going to the theatre, an ice-cream sundae with all the trimmings, swimming in a warm sea, etc.
- What person do you love the most? i.e. my mum, my husband, my nana, etc.

L.O.V.E. - Game to introduce the theme of the scope of God's love

(Resources: means for writing down answers)

Divide the participants into four groups and give one person from each group paper and pen to write down their groups answers. Explain that they have one-two minutes (at your discretion) to come up with as many things as possible that they love starting with their given letter. Give each group the letter L, O, V or E and start the clock

After a minute, shout stop and give the scorers time to count up their words. Determine which is the winning team, asking scorers to read out some of the more entertaining or surprising answers, and emphasize just how many things we love which only start with four letters of the alphabet let alone the other 20!

You could ask teachers to be the score keepers for each group

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Talk

(Resources: statistics of how many people live in your village, town, county, etc. Statistics printed on cards (optional))

Ask the scorer or another volunteer from each group to stand up, and count how many people they represent. Relate this to how many people each person in that group would have to represent to be all the people in your village, town. Keep going with the maths until you have got across just how many people there are in the world.

‘When we were suggesting things we love, some of you agreed whole-heartedly and some of you would have gone eughh. For instance I love olives (change accordingly) and other people hate them. (Christians believe that) God loves each and everyone of those millions and millions of people, and it doesn’t matter to him whether they are tall or short, fat or thin, brown or pink, really really good at maths, or unable to add up - to God every single person on this earth is precious – even the ones that are mean and unkind or no-one else likes. There is a verse in the Bible that says that God loved the world so much that he sent his only son, Jesus. So that whoever believes in him will be friends with God forever. The Bible also tells stories about how Jesus showed that love to all the people that he met. He spent time with people who everyone else ignored and treated badly. He made people feel better by healing them and telling them that God forgave them. He told stories that helped people understand how much God loves them.

We might think that Valentine’s day is all about whether you have a boyfriend or a girlfriend, but actually it was started to celebrate a saint who it is believed loved being a friend of Jesus so much that he was prepared to go to prison for his faith. For Christians, one of the most important things that Jesus said was love others, as I have loved you, and so being a friend of Jesus means trying to be loving and kind like him, even to the people who don’t seem very lovable.

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Depending on the size of the group, you can keep the children engaged by asking volunteers to hold the statistic cards if you are using them, and or remember numbers by holding up the right number of fingers

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Ritual

(Resources: heart shaped post-it notes or piece of card, pens)

Give every participant a heart to write on and give them some time to complete the sentence 'I want to love others by...' which they can write or draw on their heart

Wonder together

(Resources: powerpoint and music (optional))

Wondering rather than asking questions which require yes or no answers are a great way of helping children and adults tease out the theology of ideas behind Bible stories and rituals that we might take for granted or not understand the significance of. Wondering can be done alone in a time of space and quiet, or in small groups, or both. If you are performing the ritual on a large group of people you could suggest that they wonder whilst they are waiting for everyone to have their turn

- I wonder why we use the heart as a symbol for love and not a brain
- I wonder why Valentine's day has become more remembered than other saint's days
- I wonder how I know that I am loved
- I wonder how I can show love

Final Prayer

Thank you father God that you love me so much that you sent your son Jesus to help me know what it means to be your friend. Help me to be a loving person even to the people that seem to be unlovable. Amen

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Give the hearts out to the children as they leave the hall and the teachers can decide whether it can be a class activity or something for them to do at home

How you manage this will depend on the size of the gathering and how easy it is to get them back under control once you have encouraged conversations. You could ask them to do the wondering while you play a piece of related music and/or show them a powerpoint of relevant pictures

Make sure you know that the head teacher is happy with you saying a prayer, but it is always a good idea to say something like 'I am going to say a prayer, if you wanted to say that too, you can say 'Amen' at the end'