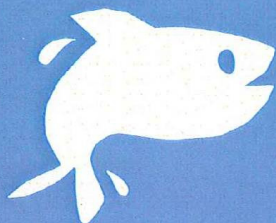


Exploring Holy Communion in Primary Schools



JUMPING FISH
TEACHING VALUES FOR LIFE

 **THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND**

WRITTEN BY SHAHNE VICKERY & CATHERINE COSTER

Introduction

Holy Communion occupies a central and sacred place in the worshipping life of almost all Christian communities worldwide. Teaching about Holy Communion is therefore of fundamental importance to children's learning about the Christian religion in schools. Holy Communion is also known as the Eucharist, Mass or the Lord's Supper. For the purposes of this publication 'Holy Communion' and 'Eucharist' are interchangeable.

This publication provides schools with materials to support a developmental approach to learning about Holy Communion, from the Foundation Stage through to Year 6.

For Church of England schools thinking of holding a Holy Communion service the publication offers questions for consideration by teachers, governors and local clergy, together with comprehensive background information to assist in planning a service

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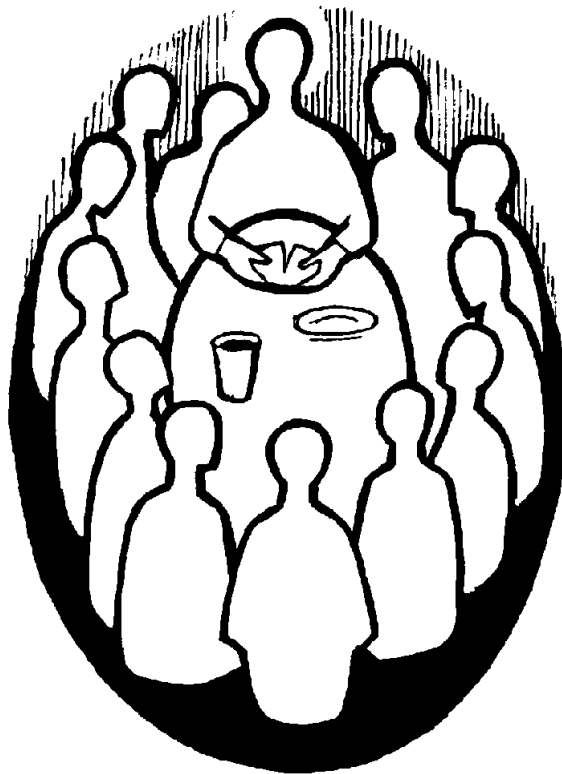
Written by Shahne Vickery, Primary Schools' Adviser Diocese of Gloucester
Catherine Coster, Primary Schools' Adviser Diocese of Bristol

Jumping Fish Ltd
Diocese of Gloucester, 9 College Green, Gloucester GL1 2LX

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Learning about Holy Communion

A developmental programme for teaching about Holy Communion
from Reception to Year 6



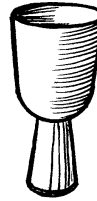
Introduction

Whilst locally agreed syllabuses for Religious Education normally include at least one unit of work with a focus on the Eucharist, many Church of England schools are seeking additional material to support a developmental approach to learning, from the Foundation Stage to Year 6. This publication has been written in response to this demand.

It is the practice in an increasing number of church schools to hold Eucharist services several times a year as part of the regular programme of Collective Worship. This resource therefore includes suggestions at the end of the units for how children from each class can contribute to the Eucharist service.

Reception:

“Jesus took the cup of wine”



In this unit children will learn:

- how Christians receive wine at the service of Holy Communion
- that Jesus told his friends to do this to remember him

Learning Outcomes

Children will:

- recognise some actions and objects that are associated with the Holy Communion celebration e.g. kneeling , praying, receiving wine from a chalice
- begin to understand that the act of receiving wine helps Christians to remember Jesus
- begin to understand how sharing with friends draws people closer together

Show a range of communion cups (chalices) to the children.

? What do you think these might be used for?

Talk about shapes, materials, symbols, patterns. Introduce the word chalice. Pour some wine into the cups and explain that wine is a special drink that people have at parties, celebrations or special meals.

? Does anyone know which fruit wine is made from?

👉 Use rolling pin, or pestle and mortar, to crush the grapes to make juice.

Show a picture of people receiving wine at communion and ask the children for suggestions about where they might be, what their kneeling posture shows us and what they might be thinking. (see www.request.org.uk/infants/infants.htm)

Explain that in church on most Sundays people use the chalice to share wine with each other. They are remembering how Jesus had a meal with his friends and shared a cup of wine with them.

- ✎ Make a range of drinks, eg smoothies, fruit juices etc and invite another class for a tasting.
- ✎ Make a display, entitled:

"We have made some drinks to share with our friends. Jesus shared some wine with his friends and told them to remember him."

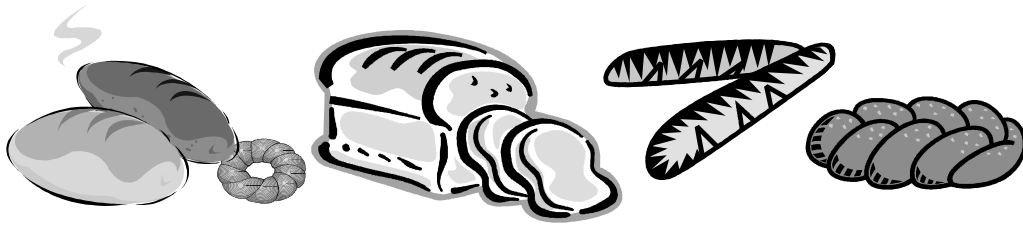


Suggestion for participation at the school Eucharist:

- ✎ Reception children could take part by presenting wine for the Eucharist at the appropriate time in the service.

Year 1:

“We break this bread”



In this unit children will learn:

- how Christians receive bread at the service of Holy Communion
- that this reminds Christians of how Jesus shared bread with his friends
- how sharing the bread helps Christians be aware of Jesus' presence with them

Learning Outcomes

Children will:

- talk about how bread is shared at the service of Holy Communion
- begin to understand how the sharing of food draws people together
- begin to understand that the shared bread represents the presence of Jesus
- begin to understand that Christians are drawn closer to each other and to Jesus at the service of Holy Communion

Show the children a basket of different sorts of bread. Talk about the names of the loaves.

? Which do you think you would most like to taste?

? Why is bread important for us?

At the last meal that Jesus shared with his friends, he broke some bread and gave it to them. As the disciples ate the bread, Jesus said “This is my body, given for you, do this in remembrance of me”.

Make some bread with the children, either in the traditional way, or using a breadmaker. (A batch may have been started earlier.)

Break the bread and share.

Explain to the children that when the priest blesses the bread,
he uses the words that Jesus said:

"This is my body which is given for you."



Suggestion for participation at the school Eucharist:



Year 1 children could take part by presenting bread at the appropriate time during the Eucharist service.

Year 2:

"We know that we have hurt you by being unkind and thoughtless to others"



In this unit children will learn:

- about the importance of confession at the beginning of the service of Holy Communion
- about the story of the lost son who was welcomed home (Luke 15)

Learning Outcomes

Children will:

- re-tell the story of the Lost Son and will identify the Christian belief in the forgiveness of God towards those who turn to him
- talk about how Christians say sorry at the beginning of the service for the wrong things they have thought, said or done and how they believe in the promise of God's forgiveness
- reflect on things for which they are sorry

Right at the beginning of the Eucharist, we say we are sorry to God so that we are ready and prepared to think about all that God has done for us. This is called the confession. We will hear a story that Jesus told about a young man who asks his father for lots of money then leaves him and goes off to enjoy himself. Read a version of the Prodigal Son.

Jesus tells us in this story that God is like a father, waiting patiently for his children to say "sorry". When this happens God welcomes them to come and be with him.



Write or draw something that you have thought, said or done that you are sorry for, on a tear shape. Hang the tears on a display around a picture of the prodigal son. e.g. 'The Return of the Prodigal' by Rembrandt

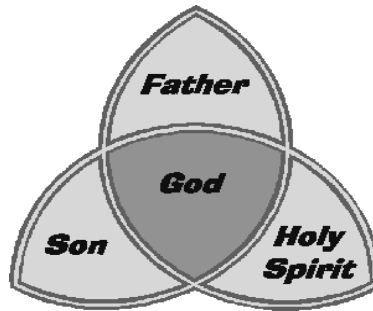
Suggestion for participation at the school Eucharist:



Year 2 children could take part by bringing teardrops to present during the confession.

Year 3:

"As God's people we have gathered.
Let us worship Him together."



In this unit children will learn:

- about the Christian belief in God as Trinity
- that Christians believe themselves to be part of the Church family united in the love of God.

Learning Outcomes

Children will:

- talk about the Christian belief in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit
- begin to understand that Christians believe that every person is worthy of God's love
- begin to show awareness that Christians are united in God's love and all have their part to play in building the (school) community

Talk about the idea of God as Trinity. We call God our Father. We know God through Jesus his Son and we feel the power and the presence of God through the Holy Spirit.

- ✎ Use three different coloured yarns and allow the children to plait them together. The three yarns make one coloured cord which is strong and beautiful.
- ✎ The yarn could be used to make the border of an altar frontal on which the children can create a collage using pictures of themselves.

Talk about how, in the Eucharist service every one in the school community comes together to show that they belong to God and to each other. The plaited cord surrounding the children's faces on the altar frontal is a visual reminder that God's love surrounds the school community and holds it together.

Suggestion for participation at the school Eucharist:

- ✎ Year 3 children could take part by saying a few words about the altar frontal they have created and the significance of their design, during the service.

Year 4:

“We remember all that Jesus did”



In this unit children will:

- reflect on the importance of memory and recalling past experience
- learn about the importance of Christians symbols that strengthen and express faith

Learning Outcomes

Children will:

- identify objects that help them recall significant moments in their lives
- describe some Christian symbols present in the celebration of Holy Communion and how they call to mind episodes in the life of Jesus
- identify how symbols might help Christians to remember important things about Jesus

- 👉 Ask children to collect some objects that call to mind significant moments, experiences or relationships in their lives. Place in a large box with a decorated lid. Give each object in the memory box a label to explain why it has been chosen.

Discuss with the children how the object in some way brings the past into the present and helps us to understand how many different people’s experiences make up our lives.

Tell the children that when Christians want to remember the life of Jesus and think about its meaning for them they sometimes use some symbols to help.

Arrange symbols used in the Eucharist and explore their meaning:

- **bread and wine** become to us the body and blood of Jesus
- the one **chalice** is shared to unite in the love of God
- the **stole** reminds the priest that he or she is the servant of others (as Jesus took the towel, so the priest takes the stole)
- the **cross** reminds us of Jesus’ death for us.

- 👉 Children can work in small groups and pool their ideas about what they can remember about the life of Jesus. They can then select some objects to represent their memories

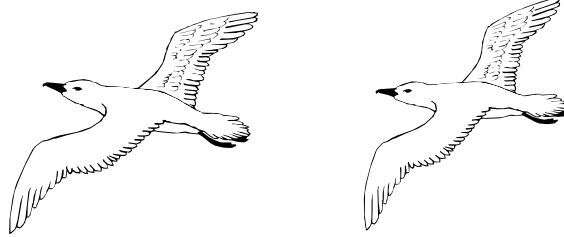
Suggestion for participation at the school Eucharist:



Year 4 children could take part by presenting the memory box at an appropriate time during the service.

Year 5:

“We celebrate the cross on which he died to set us free”



In this unit children will:

- begin to reflect on the meaning of salvation through Jesus
- on what it means to be free

Learning Outcomes

Children will:

- identify what freedom means to them
- raise questions and suggest answers about what Christians might mean when they speak about “freedom through Jesus”

Discuss with the children what it means to be set free. The following suggestions could be written on cards:

- having no worries;
- having lots of money to spend;
- being loved for who you are;
- knowing that when you have done wrong it is not held against you;
- being able to do *what* you want *when* you want;
- knowing that it does not all depend on you.

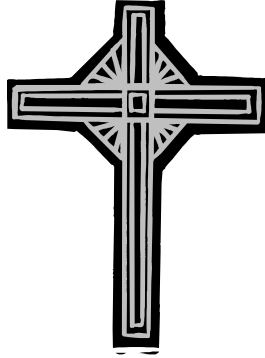


Give the children the opportunity to represent the concept of freedom in an abstract sculpture, painting or dance.

- ?
- What do Christians mean when they say “Jesus has set me free”? (They know that the wrong things that they have said and done that make them feel guilty and far away from God, have been forgiven. This is because Jesus offered himself to take the punishment that is due to us.)

When Christians come to communion they are recognising and giving thanks for the forgiveness made possible by Jesus.

They use a prayer that speaks of all that Jesus has done to set them free. ie by loving them, forgiving their sins, offering a new beginning, knowing that their future is in God's hands, giving them a fresh purpose.



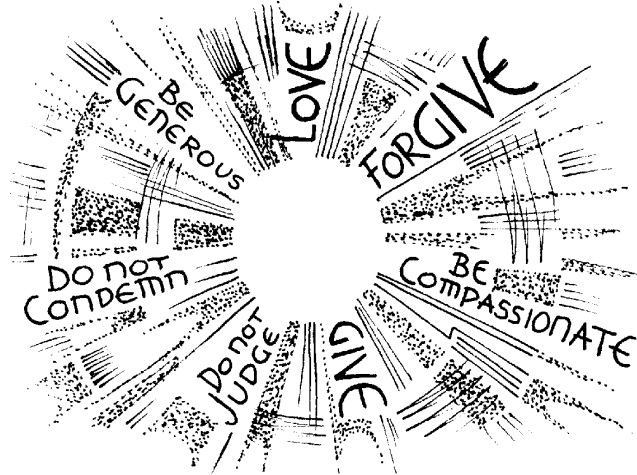
Suggestion for participation at the school Eucharist:



Year 5 children could take part by processing with the cross at the start of the service.

Year 6:

"Help us to work together for that day when your kingdom comes and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth."



In this unit children will:

- learn about the idea of the Kingdom of God
- express their own vision of an ideal future

Learning Outcomes

Children will:

- express their own ideas about an ideal future and what their part in this may be
- describe what Christians mean by the Kingdom of God, explaining why Christians believe they should live in hope
- make links with the Christian belief that we must work for God's kingdom in the world serving others and standing up for people experiencing injustice.

Ask the children what they think a kingdom of justice and mercy would **look** like, **sound** like and **feel** like. For example:

Look like - people smile rather than scowl

people forgive one another when they have been hurt or badly treated

Sound like - no police sirens

sounds of the natural world ie creatures unthreatened by humankind

Feel like - each person would feel safe, valued and loved

each person would be proud to be the person God has made them


-  Use a magazine collection or pictures from the internet to assemble images portraying "A Kingdom of Justice and Mercy".
-  Alternatively, write a class poem called "Dream of the Kingdom".

At the end of the communion service the people say:

"Send us out to live and work to your praise and glory"

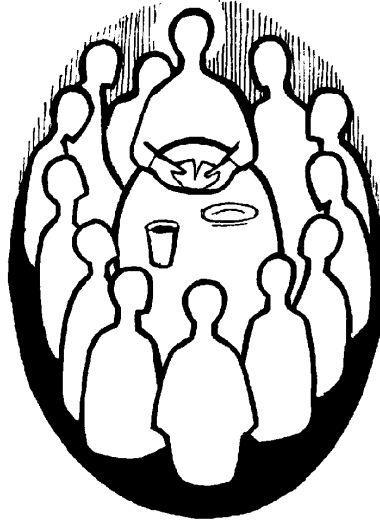
They believe that retelling what God has done and experiencing the power of God through the presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, they are empowered to go into the world to work for God's kingdom of justice and mercy.

Suggestion for participation at the school Eucharist:

-  Year 6 children could take part by reading their poem "Dream of the Kingdom" at an appropriate time during the service.

Thinking about holding a Holy Communion Service?

A discussion aid for staff and governors in
Church of England Primary Schools



What is Holy Communion?

Holy Communion (also known as the Eucharist, Mass or the Lord's Supper) is the central act of worship in the majority of Christian churches. It was given to us by Jesus when he shared a final Passover meal with his disciples – the Last Supper.

Through the Eucharist, Christians seek to obey the Lord's command to remember – to bring into the present – all that he has done for us. The broken bread and wine outpoured point to his crucified body and blood. By proclaiming the death of Christ the community of faith affirms that the promises of forgiveness and eternal life are effective for those with faith.

Jesus' actions of *taking*, *blessing*, *breaking* and *giving* the bread find their expression in the life of the Christian community through:

- a sense of being *taken* out of our individual concerns into a community, God's family
- thankfulness for God's *blessing*, the assurance of his love
- identifying with the *brokenness* of the world
- a willingness to *give* and be *given* to others in loving service

The various parts of the Eucharist service demonstrate these actions as the bread and wine are *taken* by the priest, *blessed*, *broken* and *given* to the people.

Why hold a School Eucharist?

The Eucharist is an expression of the presence of Christ within a gathered community. A school Eucharist is about belonging to:

- the school
- the local church
- the world-wide Christian community

A Eucharist helps:

- to nurture the children's relationship with God
- to give children a knowledge and understanding of this central act at the heart of Christian life
- to give expression to the strong links between the church school, the parish church and the wider Christian community
- to explore some of the deepest values that the school holds
- to develop the children's sense of mystery and reverence for God
- to contribute to the development of RE
- to enrich the collective worship of the school.

Questions for consideration

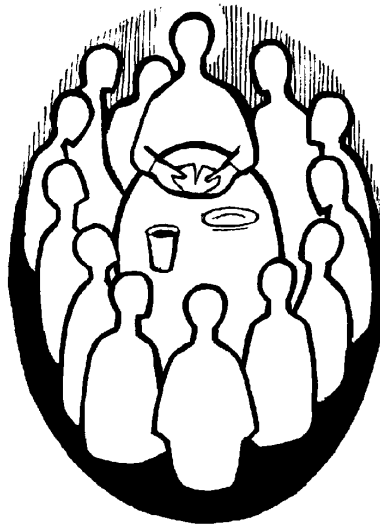
- Is there general accord about holding a Eucharist amongst the staff, governors and parents?
- Will all year groups attend the school Eucharist?
- Will the children receive communion or a blessing?
- What is the policy of the parish church concerning children and Holy Communion?
- What preparation will the children receive, and who will undertake this?
- How will this preparation link to the RE and other Collective Worship in the school?
- Will parents and governors be invited to attend? Always, or on special occasions, eg Easter, Christmas?
- How will all children be valued and feel included in the School Eucharist?
- Where will the Eucharist be held? In school, in church, in the open air?
- How often will the Eucharist be held?

If, as a result of reading this booklet, you wish to take the idea of holding a Eucharist in your school further, you could:

- invite your local clergy and Diocesan Schools' Adviser to visit for further discussion
- get in touch with other schools who are holding a Eucharist (your Diocese Education Department may have a list).

Preparing for a Holy Communion Service in your school

A resource to help to prepare and include the whole school community in planning for a Holy Communion Service



It is assumed that the school staff, governing body and parish clergy will have had initial discussions and read the section '*Thinking about Holding a Holy Communion Service*'.

What is the Eucharist about?

Schools that have enjoyed the Eucharist as part of the pattern of their school worship have found the experience to be enriching and positive, adding an extra dimension to worship. In a school Eucharist the children are being introduced to and invited to participate in the central act of Christian worship.

The word Eucharist means thanksgiving. When people celebrate the Eucharist they are saying thank-you to God for the creation of the universe and for the work of Jesus Christ. The Eucharist reassures Christians of God's love and promises, strengthens faith and helps them to understand their commitment to the Church community.

On the night before he died, around the time of the Jewish Passover, Jesus shared a meal with his friends. The Eucharist recalls and brings to mind this event and lies at the heart of Christian worship. It is not just remembering a past event but making the presence of Jesus known to his followers in every generation. The Church has always taught that participants do not just receive the bread and wine, but receive by faith the life of Jesus himself.

The Eucharist will hold different meanings for children and adults at different stages of their faith journey. What happens in the Eucharist remains essentially an amazing mystery treasured by the Church.

Children and Communion

The traditional view of the Church of England has been that while baptism is the point of entry into the life of the Christian community, confirmation by a Bishop is a rite of passage marking entry into full membership of the Anglican Church and entitles people to receive the bread and wine at communion.

However the Church's view is gradually changing to allow children not only to receive communion before confirmation but also to play as full a part as possible in the life of the Church. The convincing arguments in favour of a change in practice seem to have been:

- a clearer understanding of baptism as full initiation into the Church
- acceptance of children as important to the life of the Church
- a greater appreciation of children's spirituality and their need for spiritual nourishment
- an awareness of what children can teach us in our own journey of faith.

Schools must consult their parish priest to check the situation within their diocese.

The needs of children

Jesus accepted and welcomed children throughout his ministry, and issued dire warnings to those who would do otherwise. In the communities to which they belong, children need to feel accepted and valued for who they are in the present, rather than with an eye to the future of the Church. In worship, as in all their learning, they should be active participants.

If a school decides to hold a Eucharist, every child should feel a sense of inclusion. The school needs to consider very carefully how this could best be achieved. It may not mean that each child receives bread and wine, but that inclusion is achieved in other ways. It is always good practice to evaluate what children have experienced and this evaluation should inform future planning.

Children can participate in the liturgy in a variety of ways:

- present a dramatic interpretation of the readings
- prepare and deliver prayers
- make responses to various biddings
- sing parts of the service
- contribute artwork that reflects the theme of the service
- make a temporary altar frontal or make banners to transform the environment for worship
- provide music - instrumental accompaniment or composition of own simple melodies for responses
- choose music to assist contemplation, reflection, celebration etc
- bake the bread
- present the bread and wine in the service
- perform a liturgical dance that explores the theme of worship

Clearly all suggestions could not be included in every celebration of the Eucharist. However it is important for schools to think about how the children are made to feel welcome and part of the proceedings.

Local Parish issues

The school must reflect any decisions made by the local parish with regard to children receiving communion. The local parish priest will normally be the celebrant at the school Eucharist. However, it is possible with the agreement of the Incumbent for another priest to celebrate. There may be good reason for this to happen. Full consultation at every stage is essential.

Preparation

Preparation of parents

Parents need to be invited to take part in the consultation process about any proposals to have a school Eucharist. The school will need to ensure that they have fully explained their reasons for wishing to introduce a school Eucharist. If children are to receive communion in school then parental permission will need to be sought. As in all acts of school worship, parents have the right to withdraw children if they so wish. Regardless of whether or not children will receive communion, parents should be fully informed about the preparations that children will receive.

Preparation of children

In a Church school a progressive and comprehensive teaching programme about the meaning of baptism, belonging to the Church and the meaning of the Eucharist should be in place. An example of one such programme is included in this booklet.

The Eucharist itself will also be a learning experience. Attitudes and actions often communicate to children concepts such as forgiveness, praise, thankfulness, devotion and contrition.

Consultation with staff

As the Eucharist is a public expression of faith, some staff may feel vulnerable, if for whatever reason they do not receive the bread and wine. Such issues will call for sensitive management. Staff may welcome some in-service training on the meaning and significance of the Eucharist for Christians. If so, contact your Diocesan Schools' Adviser or local clergy. Staff members have the right to withdraw from this act of worship.

A brief explanation of the Eucharist service

The first part of the Eucharist Service is known as the *Liturgy of the Word*. During this section the community gather together, express *their* sorrow to God for ways in which they have let *Him*, one another and themselves down. As a representative of the whole Church the priest declares God's forgiveness.

The people hear the word of God from the chosen readings for the day. The meaning of this is explored for or by the children as creatively as possible in words, drama, dance, art or poetry etc.

The faith of the Church is expressed by everyone present in an authorised creed.

Prayers are offered for individuals, the community and the wider world. (See service card for a variety of suggestions of creative ways to pray.)

The Peace is shared by all present. This can be experienced in a variety of ways from a simple verbal response, to sharing the Peace by shaking the hand of the people nearest to you.

The Peace concludes the Liturgy of the Word and leads into the communion.

The bread and wine are taken to the altar. They are blessed by the priest, who will say a prayer which gathers together in words of praise and thanksgiving all that God has done for us in Christ.

The bread is broken and given to those present. The wine is also shared. Those who do not receive the bread and wine are invited to come forward to receive the Church's blessing alongside those who are coming forward to receive communion.

The members of the gathered community are then sent out to show God's love in the world, strengthened and renewed to serve God in their daily lives.

The service sheet that follows may be printed and distributed for use in Holy Communion. If printed as A4 portrait then folded vertically, it forms an easy to hold 4-page service sheet.

We receive the bread and wine God has blessed

Priest: Come, with faith, and receive.
Eat and drink remembering that Jesus died for you.

During the distribution of bread and wine songs or chants may be sung:

1. Be still and know that I am God (x3)
I am the Lord that healeth thee (x3)
In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust (x3)
2. Father, we adore You,
Lay our lives before You
How we love You

Jesus we adore You etc

Spirit we adore You.....etc
3. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me;
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me;
Fill me anew, Fill me anew
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

We say a final prayer

All: **Father of all,
we give you thanks and praise
for all that Jesus has done for us.
Help us to share with others
the new life you give in Jesus our Lord.
Be with us in this day's journey;
Open our eyes
to see the wonder of your creation
and help us to praise and serve you
in all we do.
Amen.**

We go with God's blessing

A seasonal blessing may be used or:

Priest: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all evermore.
Amen.

Song of celebration or dedication

Priest: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
All: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**



A Service of Holy Communion for Church of England Primary Schools

We gather and greet one another

Leader: As God's people we have gathered.

All: **Let us worship Him together.**

We sing God's praise

Song of praise

Leader: The Lord be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

We say we are sorry

Leader: At the very beginning of our service
we say sorry to God and to each other
for the wrong things we have thought,
the wrong things we have said
and the wrong things we have done.

Let us be quiet for a moment and open our
hearts to God's love, knowing that God will
forgive us if we are really sorry.

Pause for reflection

All: **Almighty God, our loving Father,
we know that we have hurt you and one
another by what we have thought and
said and done.
We are truly sorry
and ask you to forgive us.
Help us to live each day
in the way of Jesus.**

Leader: May the God of love and power
forgive *you* and free *you* from *your* sins,
help and strengthen *you* by his Spirit
and raise *you* to new life in Christ our Lord.

We pray to the Father

A time of quiet is followed by the Prayer of the day

We praise God *(sung Gloria)*

Cantor: Glory to God, Glory to God,
Glory to the Father

Chorus: **To Him be glory for ever,
Alleluia amen (x3)....**

Glory to God, Glory to God,
Glory to Christ Jesus

Chorus: **To Him be glory for ever,
Alleluia amen (x3)....**

Glory to God, Glory to God,
Glory to the Spirit

Chorus: **To Him be glory for ever,
Alleluia amen (x3)....**

We listen to the Good News

This may take the form of a dramatic reading or scripted drama of the Gospel story.

Talk (or drama by pupils)

We share our faith

All stand

Leader: Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
Source of all being and life,
The one for whom we exist?

All: **We believe and trust in Him.**

Leader: Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All: **We believe and trust in Him.**

Leader: Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All: **We believe and trust in Him.**

Leader: This is the faith of the church.

All: **This is our faith
We believe and trust in one God, Father,
Son and Holy Spirit.**

We pray for God's world

"Active" prayers using prayer beads, prayer flags, signed prayers etc or children's spoken prayers with sung response.

**O Lord, hear my prayer
O Lord, hear my prayer
When I call, answer me.
O Lord, hear my prayer
O Lord, hear my prayer
Come and listen to me.** (Taize Chant)

We share God's peace

Leader: God has called us to live in peace.
The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All: **And also with you.**

Song (during which Bread and Wine are presented by the children)

We give God thanks with and for Jesus

Priest: The Lord is here.

All: **His Spirit is with us.**

Priest: Lift up your hearts.

All: **We lift them to the Lord**

Priest: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: **It is right to give thanks and praise.**

Priest: Father, you made the world
and love your creation.
You gave your Son, Jesus Christ,
to be our Saviour.
By his death and resurrection,
Jesus set us free.
We gladly thank and praise you, singing:

Sanctus (sung)

All: **Holy , Holy , Holy is the Lord
Holy , Holy , Holy is the Lord
Holy is the Lord God Almighty
Who was, and is and is to come
Holy , Holy , Holy is the Lord**

Priest: On the night Jesus was betrayed,
he had supper with his friends.
He took bread and gave you thanks.
He broke it and gave it to his friends, saying:
Take, eat; this is my body
which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.
After supper, Jesus took the cup of wine.
He gave you thanks and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new promise, which is
given for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in remembrance of me.
So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did.
Send your Holy Spirit
so that this bread and wine may be for us the
body and blood of your Son,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
As we eat and drink this bread and wine
make us one in Christ, our risen Lord,
and help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes and justice and
mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your children,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints,
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours,
O loving Father, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Let's join together in the prayer Jesus taught
us. (either said or sung)

All: **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver
us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

We break the bread

Priest: We break this bread,

All: **To share in the body of Christ.**

Priest: Though we are many, we are one body,

All: **Because we all share in one bread.**