



# Primary Collective Worship Resources

## The church is a holy place

### Step 1: We gather

Gather the children and begin your session by introducing some music to create the mood.

Since this session is about the church being a holy place, consider using verse one of the hymn “Be still for the presence of the Lord”:

“Be still, for the presence of the Lord, The Holy One, is here.  
Come bow before him now, with reverence and fear.  
In him no sin is found, we stand on holy ground.  
Be still for the presence of the Lord, The Holy One, is here”.

There are three verses; I suggest you use only the first verse because it illustrates the Christian belief that Jesus is present whenever Christians meet to pray.

In this session on the church being a holy place, you might talk about all the sacred things which can be found in a church building. You might ask the children to tell you what can be found in a church and what the different things mean.

Most importantly, what makes the church holy is the people who come there to worship God together.

Explain that the church is a place where Christians come together as one family—brothers and sisters with Christ—all together in God’s house.

### Step 2: What the Bible says

You now move to your Sacred Place for the Scripture-based part of the session. Ask if they can see any similarities between the church and their Sacred Place.

When they have settled, you might listen to or sing the hymn or, perhaps, just the refrain again, to “Be still for the presence of the Lord” by David Evans.

Christians believe that Jesus speaks to them through the words of the Bible, and they show this by treating it with great reverence.

Now, invite the children, if they want to participate, to copy you as you trace the sign of the cross on yourself with your thumb as we pray:

God be in my mind (sign the forehead)  
God be on my lips (sign the lips)  
And God be in my heart (sign the chest).

The reader picks up the book and, holding it up high, reads the Scripture clearly and reverently to the whole group using an adapted version of the Gospel of John 2:14-16:

Jesus went up to Jerusalem.  
Inside the temple,  
he saw people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons.  
And there were others changing money for people.  
Jesus said, “Take all this out of here  
and stop turning my Father’s house into a market.”  
Then he chased the cattle and the sheep out of the temple.  
He knocked over the money tables and their coins fell on the ground.  
He said “God’s house is not a market; it is a place of prayer.”

The reader says, “The Word of the Lord”. The response is “Thanks be to God”.



Tell the children a little bit about the passage they have just heard. Jesus was in the temple and saw that, even though it was a holy place, people were treating it as if it was a marketplace, which made him very angry about what they were doing. Catholics understand this passage to mean that like the temple, a church is 'God's house and it is a Special Place; it is a place of prayer'."

### Step 3: Our life experience

In this session, the empty church on the activity sheet should be filled up with the items above it.

You might get each child to make up their own church. Alternatively, if you prefer, you can enlarge the activity sheet to A2 size and explain what's what as they place the items into the church.

You may like to take the children into a church or chapel and do this exercise there.

Talk with the children about what the different things are and how they each help to show that a church is a holy place.

Take time to point out the Tabernacle which has the Blessed Sacrament kept inside it. This Tabernacle means that when Catholics come to the church to pray, they believe that Jesus is present in a special way in it.

Let this part of the session be relaxed and fun.

You might encourage conversation by asking the children questions like what the lectern is for, why candles are used and why there is a cross.

Ask them about the altar and the altar cloth. They may have experience of special meals at home when there is a white table cloth on the table. Ask them if they recognize the baptismal font and if they know where the font is positioned in churches. Ask if they know what the Paschal Candle is. They may know that it is not always in the Sanctuary; it is there and lit during Eastertide and for the celebration of baptisms and at funerals.

### Step 4: How God's word affects our lives

The group can now relax and respond to what they have experienced.

They can talk about what it is like to be in a sacred space.

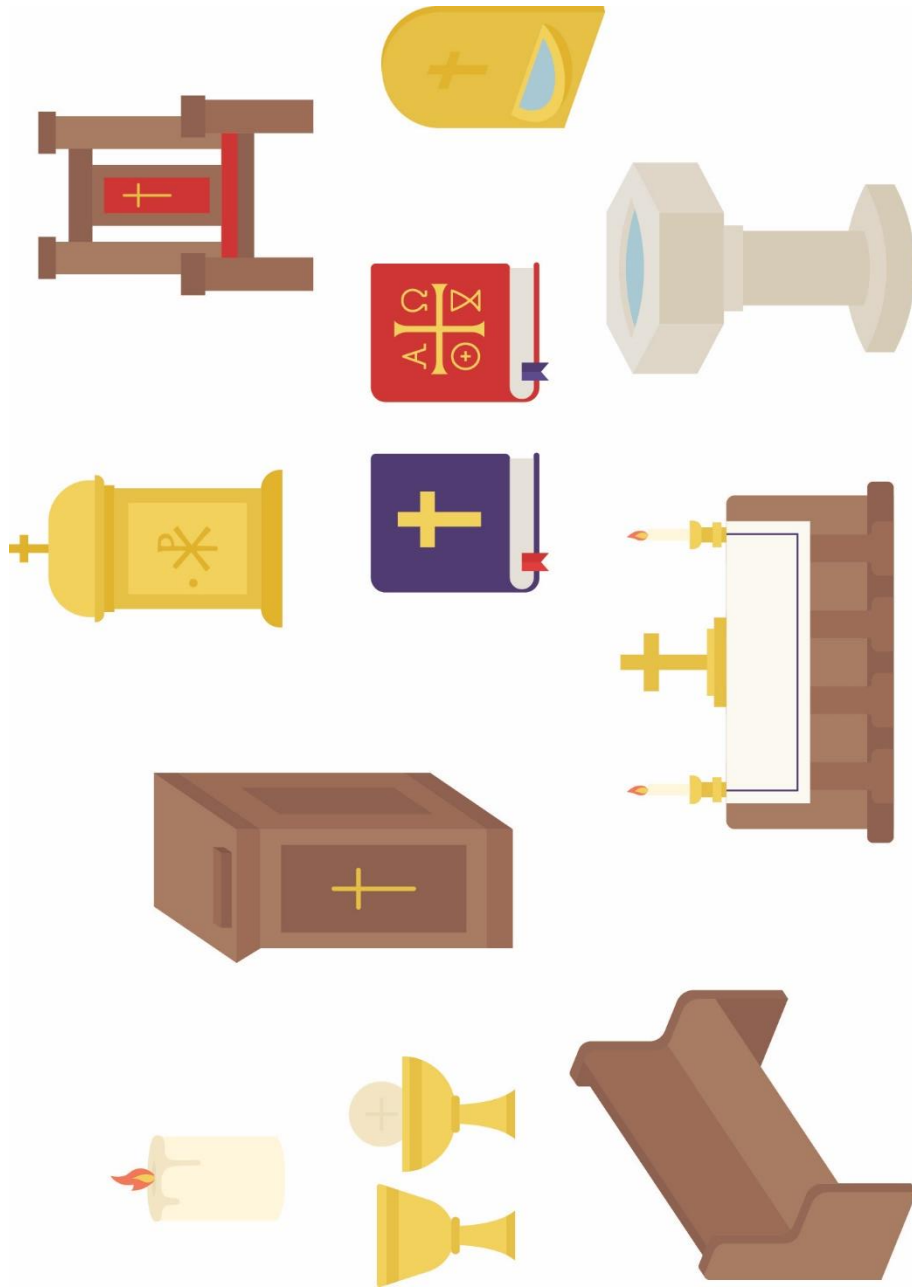
Does it feel different from other places where communities gather?

Is it easy to be reverent and quiet or do they get distracted?

They might like to take their activity sheet home to show their families and to quiz them as to whether they know about all the sacred items in the church.



## Activity Sheet: The church is a holy place



**Cut out the pictures of the sacred items that we find in the church and place them into the church on the next page.**

