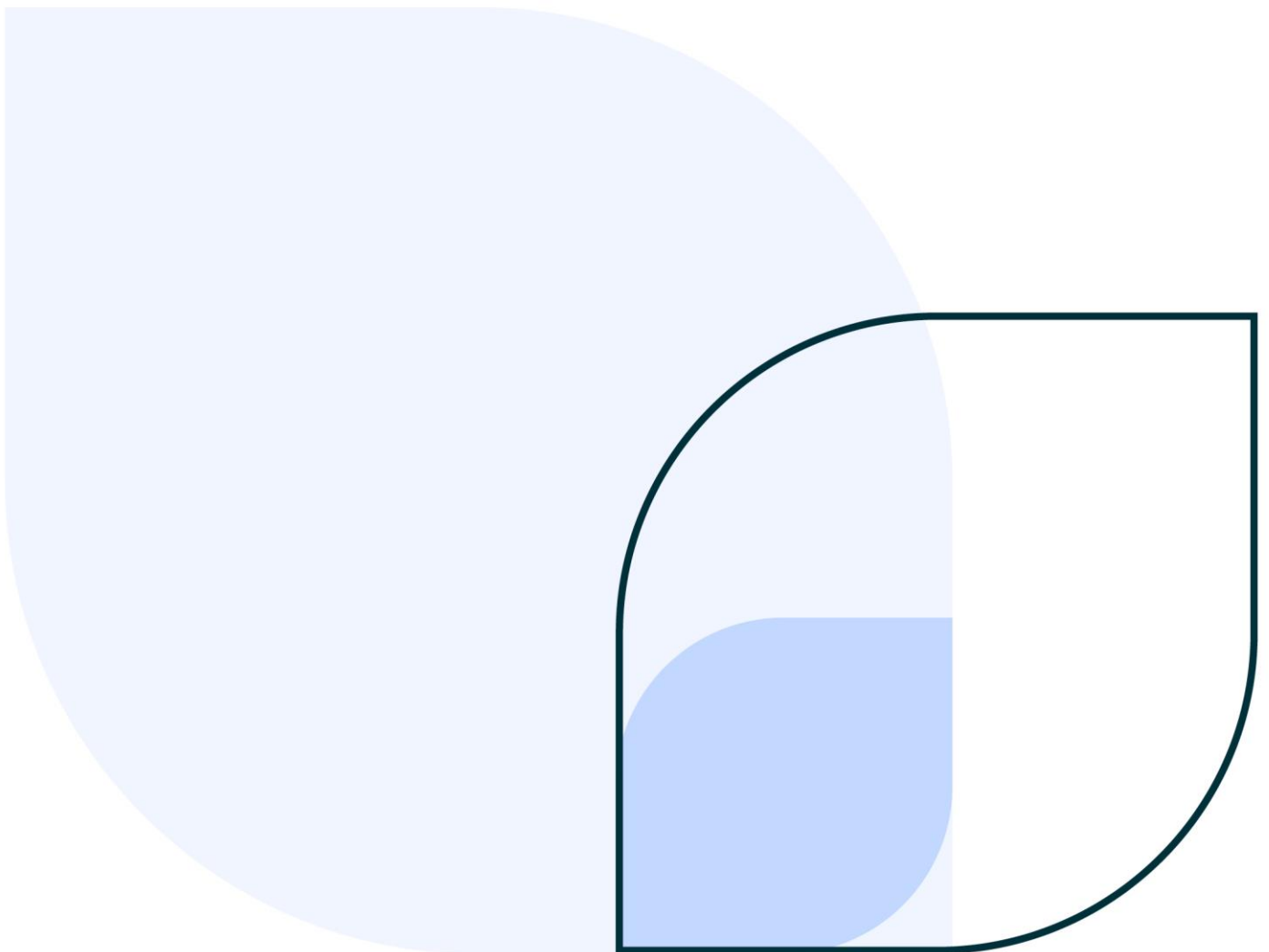


# Collective Worship

Secondary resources  
From Difference to Unity: Tolerance as a Path to Peace





## Key Concept / Message

### Slide 1

Today, we gather to reflect on the International Day of Tolerance, a day dedicated to fostering understanding, respect, and acceptance of the diverse world we live in. Tolerance goes beyond simply "putting up" with others who are different from us. It means embracing the richness of human diversity, recognizing that our differences—whether they be in culture, belief, language, or lifestyle—are what make the world a more vibrant and diverse place.

In a world where conflict and division can easily arise from misunderstanding or fear, tolerance becomes a powerful tool for peace. As we celebrate this day, we are reminded that each of us has a role to play in creating a world where everyone feels respected and valued, regardless of our differences. Tolerance doesn't mean agreeing with everything or abandoning our own beliefs; it means learning to live together with mutual respect, kindness, and empathy.

The International Day of Tolerance is observed annually on November 16, a date chosen to commemorate the adoption of the "Declaration of Principles on Tolerance" by UNESCO in 1995. This declaration was established during a time when the need for tolerance and understanding among diverse cultures became increasingly apparent. In a world characterized by rapid globalization, migration, and multicultural interactions, the importance of promoting peace and acceptance across differences has never been more crucial.

The day serves as a reminder that tolerance is not merely a passive acceptance of differences, but an active engagement in fostering respect, understanding, and coexistence among individuals from various backgrounds. It calls upon us to recognize the value of diversity and to confront prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance in all their forms. By promoting tolerance, we affirm our commitment to building inclusive communities where everyone can live with dignity and respect.

As we come together to observe this significant day in our collective worship, let us reflect on the importance of tolerance in our lives and the positive impact it can have on our communities. May we be inspired to foster a spirit of acceptance and understanding, ensuring that every person, regardless of their background or beliefs, is valued and respected.

## Gathering

Begin with your usual greeting to gather everyone together (NB familiarity is a helpful part of providing a safe environment in difficult times). As children enter worship, use a reflective piece of music.

You may like to start with an opening prayer, such as this one:

### Slide 2

Almighty God,  
We thank You for the rich diversity You have created in our world.  
As we gather on this International Day of Tolerance,  
Help us to embrace our differences with open hearts and minds.



Grant us the wisdom to practise love,  
And the patience to understand one another.  
May we become instruments of Your peace,  
Fostering tolerance and respect in our community.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.

### Slide 3

Consider putting the following quotes on a slide for students to reflect on:

**Jennifer Dukes Lee** - "In a world where you can be anything, be kind."

**Mahatma Gandhi** - "Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the blessing of the 21st century."

**Kelsey Grammer** - "I think tolerance is something everybody needs to understand. It doesn't mean accepting other people's viewpoints, but it does mean respecting them."

**Audre Lorde** - "It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences."

You might consider asking students to reflect on **one** of the following questions:

What can we learn from the quotes of those who have come before us?

What actions can we take as individuals to promote kindness and respect within our community?

How can we learn from the experiences of others to foster a more tolerant environment at school?

How can we support each other in celebrating our differences while finding common ground?

In what ways can acts of kindness create a ripple effect of tolerance in our community?

## Bible Passage

### Slide 4

#### Ephesians 4:2-3

*"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."*



### Context for worship leaders

The letter to the Ephesians, written by the Apostle Paul during his imprisonment in Rome (around AD 60-62), was intended for multiple early Christian communities, including the church in Ephesus. The letter focuses on the theological foundation of the Christian faith and provides practical advice on how believers should live in response to the gospel. A central theme of Ephesians is unity—unity in Christ, unity within the church, and unity among all believers.

Paul's message in Ephesians is a call for tolerance and understanding among diverse groups. During that time, the early Christian church was composed of both Jewish and Gentile believers, who often had deep cultural and religious differences. Paul addresses these divisions, emphasizing that through Christ, the walls that separated them have been broken down. His vision of the church is one where all believers live as one unified body, regardless of their differences. This idea is the heart of tolerance—understanding and accepting differences in others and striving to live together in peace and harmony.

Paul's instruction to "bear with one another in love" is a clear directive to practice tolerance. Tolerance is not merely putting up with others but genuinely seeking unity and peace, even when differences arise. He also urges believers to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace," meaning that tolerance is not a passive attitude but an active pursuit of unity and reconciliation.

On International Day of Tolerance, the message of Ephesians 4:2-3 offers a powerful biblical foundation for reflection. In today's world, intolerance manifests itself in numerous ways—racial, cultural, religious, and even political divisions can drive people apart. Social media can amplify these divisions, creating echo chambers where differing viewpoints are rejected rather than understood. Yet, Paul's message in Ephesians encourages us to seek unity through the active practice of tolerance, guided by humility, gentleness, patience, and love.

The passage reminds us that tolerance is not passive; it requires intentional effort to live in peace with others. It calls us to embrace diversity as an opportunity for growth, not division. As we reflect on this passage during International Day of Tolerance, we are reminded that tolerance is a deeply Christian value, one that reflects Christ's love for all humanity. Just as early Christians were called to embrace unity across cultural divides, so too are Christians called today to work toward a more inclusive world where tolerance and understanding prevail over division and hostility.

## Engagement

### Slide 5

#### Tolerance as Love in Action: Lessons from Ephesians

In times of division and conflict, it's essential to remember the power of understanding and acceptance. The recent tensions within our society have highlighted the urgent need for greater understanding and acceptance among diverse groups. As we navigate these challenging moments, we may encounter feelings of frustration and anger, which can arise from misunderstandings and a lack of empathy. It is crucial to remember that while these emotions are natural, resorting to hostility and violence is not the answer.



As we gather on this International Day of Tolerance, let us take a moment to reflect on the importance of compassion and empathy in our interactions with one another.

As we reflect on the importance of tolerance, we can draw inspiration from key biblical principles that promote love and understanding.

- **Listening:** The Bible teaches us to be quick to listen and slow to speak (James 1:19). Active listening allows us to understand different perspectives and fosters an environment where everyone feels heard and valued.
- **Patience:** In a world filled with differing opinions and beliefs, patience is essential. Proverbs 15:18 reminds us that “a hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.” By exercising patience, we can create space for dialogue rather than confrontation.
- **Empathy:** Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) exemplifies the importance of showing compassion and love to those who may be different from us. This story reminds us that our responsibility extends beyond our immediate circles to include everyone, regardless of their background.
- **Forgiveness:** Ephesians 4:32 calls us to “be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Embracing forgiveness allows us to move past grievances and build stronger relationships based on mutual respect.

As we celebrate International Day of Tolerance, let us commit ourselves to these principles. By fostering a spirit of understanding and compassion, we can bridge divides and create a more inclusive community. Together, let us work towards a future where differences are embraced, and everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

- How can we embody tolerance in our daily lives?
- How can we reach out to those who may feel marginalized or misunderstood?
- How can we practice active listening to better understand the perspectives of others?
- In what ways can you show kindness to someone who holds different beliefs or opinions?
- What role does patience play in resolving conflicts and fostering understanding?

## Response

### Slide 6

#### Embracing Tolerance: Building a Harmonious Community

Invite students to think about ways they can foster inclusivity, ensuring that individuals from diverse backgrounds can live together harmoniously.

**Reflection Prompts:** Encourage students to reflect on one of the following prompts, which they can complete as a written task during the lesson:

1. I can contribute to a more tolerant community by...
2. To better understand others, especially in challenging times, I could...
3. To help create a welcoming environment, I could...
4. I can make a positive impact, even when situations feel overwhelming, by...



5. To foster tolerance, even when faced with difficulties, I could...

### Slide 7

Prayer:

Loving God,

We come together in prayer, seeking your guidance in building a more just and inclusive world.

Open our hearts to see the dignity and worth of every person, and teach us to stand against prejudice and division. Help us to be peacemakers in our school, our community, and beyond.

May we reflect your love in all we do, showing kindness, understanding, and respect to all. Strengthen our commitment to creating a society where everyone is valued and can thrive.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Spiritual Development

[Practical ways to help us explore faith and develop spiritually at home and school together](#)

### EXPERIENCES that can help us ENCOUNTER:

Celebrating Differences Booklet: Create a class booklet where each student contributes a page on what makes them unique. This could be through written stories, poems or art. Students could consider the following questions:

- How do your beliefs or values shape your understanding of tolerance and acceptance in the world?
- What unique talent or skill do you possess that helps promote understanding and respect among diverse individuals?
- In what ways do you express and celebrate your identity in a manner that fosters inclusivity and tolerance?
- How does your individuality enhance the sense of community and promote tolerance within your class or school?

### Use the EXAMEN prayer to pray for a more inclusive society.

1. Loving God, I thank You for the unique gifts and perspectives of each person in my life.
2. Help me to approach others with an open heart and a spirit of understanding.
3. Grant me the wisdom to listen deeply and respond with compassion, even in moments of disagreement.
4. May I strive to be a peacemaker, fostering harmony in my community.
5. Through Your grace, let me embody tolerance and love in all that I do.



## Reducing Intolerance in Our World

As we seek to reduce intolerance in the world, we are reminded that true change begins with each one of us. At the heart of this effort is the need to foster understanding and empathy—first within ourselves, then in our communities, and beyond. This involves actively listening to others, especially those whose perspectives may be different from our own, and recognizing that diversity is something to celebrate, not fear. Education is key in breaking down the barriers of prejudice and challenging the harmful stereotypes that divide us. Schools and communities must be spaces where open and respectful dialogue can take place, allowing us to appreciate both our differences and our shared humanity.

In today's digital world, social media has the power to either promote intolerance or build bridges of understanding. Too often, social media is used to spread hate, amplify division, and fuel conflict. But we can use these platforms for good—to share stories that foster compassion, to connect with people from different cultures, and to promote messages of inclusion and peace. If we use our voices online to uplift, support, and stand against injustice, social media can become a powerful tool in building a more tolerant and inclusive society.

Let us commit ourselves to being examples of patience, respect, and kindness, both in person and online, as we work toward a world where intolerance has no place. Through our actions, we can build a community that reflects the love, peace, and unity that we wish to see in the world.

ACTIVITIES that can develop PRACTICES-HABITS:

### 1. Tolerance Tree

**Activity:** Each student writes one way they can show tolerance on a leaf-shaped paper. The leaves are then assembled on a large paper tree.

**How Teachers Can Use It:**

- **Introduction:** Begin by discussing what tolerance means and how it impacts relationships in daily life. Ask students to share examples of tolerance they've seen or experienced.
- **Guided Reflection:** Have students reflect on their personal actions and write down one specific way they can show tolerance in their school or community.
- **Assembling the Tree:** Create a large paper tree on the classroom wall, or in a communal area, and let students place their leaves on the branches. The tree grows as more leaves are added, symbolizing the collective commitment to tolerance.
- **Follow-Up:** Teachers can revisit the tree throughout the school year, asking students to reflect on whether they have followed through with their commitments.

### 2. Discussion on Quotes

**Activity:** Use famous quotes on tolerance (e.g., from Nelson Mandela) and have students reflect on their meanings.



### How Teachers Can Use It:

- **Select Quotes:** Choose several powerful quotes from historical or modern figures like Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Malala Yousafzai, and Maya Angelou, focusing on themes of tolerance and unity.
- **Discussion Groups:** Divide students into small groups, giving each group a different quote. Have them discuss the meaning of the quote and how it applies to their lives, community, or the world today.
- **Reflection Questions:** Provide reflective prompts like “What does this quote teach us about tolerance?” or “How can we apply this message in our school?”
- **Poster Creation:** Each group could then create a visual representation of their quote to display in the school, alongside their interpretation of its meaning.

### 3. Speech Competition

**Activity:** Host a speech competition where students write and deliver speeches on the importance of tolerance in modern society.

#### How Teachers Can Use It:

- **Topic Selection:** Guide students in selecting topics related to tolerance, such as dealing with prejudice, promoting inclusivity, or standing up for others. Encourage them to include personal stories or real-life examples in their speeches.
- **Speech Writing Workshop:** Help students outline and structure their speeches. Focus on developing a strong opening, clear arguments, and a powerful conclusion that reinforces the theme of tolerance.
- **Speech Delivery:** Host the competition in front of the class or school. Allow students to practice public speaking, focusing on voice projection, body language, and clarity.
- **Feedback:** Teachers and peers can provide constructive feedback on the speeches, highlighting effective messages and encouraging further thought on how tolerance can be implemented in their school or community.

### 4. Tolerance Art Installation

**Activity:** Work together on an art installation that represents tolerance, unity, and inclusion, to be displayed in a public space.

#### How Teachers Can Use It:

- **Theme Development:** Discuss what symbols or images represent tolerance and unity. Students could create sketches, brainstorm ideas, and come up with a theme that embodies the message of tolerance.
- **Collaborative Creation:** Depending on the resources available, students can work together to create sculptures, murals, or multi-media pieces that communicate the values of inclusivity, respect, and peace.
- **Public Display:** The installation can be set up in a visible location in the school or the local community, where it will serve as a reminder of the importance of tolerance.





- **Reflection on Process:** After completing the installation, students can reflect on what they learned about working together and promoting tolerance through art. The process itself can be a lesson in collaboration and empathy.

## 5. Tolerance Walk

**Activity:** Take a walk around the local community, identifying symbols or landmarks that promote unity and diversity.

### How Teachers Can Use It:

- **Planning the Walk:** Before the walk, discuss with students what they expect to see and how they think the community represents tolerance. Identify key places (e.g., places of worship, murals, community centers) that symbolize cultural or social diversity.
- **Observation:** During the walk, students can take photos or write down observations about what they see. Teachers can guide them to notice inclusive spaces, symbols of diversity, or examples of peaceful cohabitation.
- **Reflection Afterward:** After the walk, students can reflect on how their community demonstrates tolerance and where there may be room for improvement. They can also discuss how they felt seeing these diverse aspects of their community.
- **Classroom Connection:** Consider having students create maps of the walk with notations about what they found meaningful and how these landmarks contribute to a more tolerant community.

CONVERSATIONS which CONNECT COMMUNITIES:

**Kofi Annan:** "Tolerance, inter-cultural dialogue and respect for diversity are more essential than ever in a world where people are becoming more and more closely interconnected."

**Shirley Chisholm:** "We must reject not only the stereotypes that others hold of us, but also the stereotypes that we hold of others."

**Helen Keller:** "The highest result of education is tolerance."

### Personal Reflection:

What does tolerance mean to you personally, and how do you practice it in your daily life?

Can you recall a time when you learned something valuable from someone with a different perspective? What did you learn?

How do you respond when you encounter someone whose beliefs differ from your own?

How can you show kindness to someone who feels isolated or marginalized?

How do you feel when you are part of a diverse group? What insights do you gain from that experience?



### **Community and Society:**

How can our community promote greater understanding and respect among its diverse members?

In what ways can you get involved to support tolerance within your local community?

How can we address intolerance or discrimination when we see it in our community?

How can art, music, or literature serve as tools to promote tolerance and understanding in our community?

How does the media influence our perceptions of different cultures and communities?

### **Global Perspective:**

How does globalization impact our interactions with people from different cultures?

What role does education play in fostering tolerance?

How can technology be used to bridge gaps and promote understanding between diverse cultures?

How can individuals advocate for tolerance in an increasingly interconnected world?

What can you do as a global citizen to promote tolerance and understanding?

## **Collective Worship – Our approach**

### **Invitational**

Everyone is welcome to take part in collective worship, as much or as little as they or their parents and carers are comfortable with. This means we use invitational language and consider carefully our choice of words and songs. Children are invited to pray but are not compelled or expected to do so; they always have a choice. We invite them to pray or reflect in whatever way they would usually as a family, if that is part of their home experience.

### **Inclusive**

Acts of worship need to be inclusive of all. Therefore, we choose topics and ideas that are shared by different faiths and worldviews. When we present Christian teaching, we make it clear that this is ‘what Christians believe’, saying things like:

‘I wonder why this story might be important to Christians?’

‘The story today comes from the Bible (the holy book of Christians), which teaches that ...

Our worship should be accessible for children and young people with a range of different backgrounds, and so we take care that activities do not require expensive resources. We also offer a variety of activities, so that children and young people with differing needs can all find something they can engage with.

### **Inspiring**

We aim for our acts of worship to inspire those engaging with them. How might it engage their emotions, enabling a sense of peace, comfort, hope or motivation? How might it inspire them into action, into thinking differently and considering their behaviour or actions? How might it inspire them to reflect on their faith or beliefs, and on the faith or beliefs of others?