

How Can Christian School Chaplains Use
Prayer And Reflective Spaces
To Help Children And Young People
Experience Peace?

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How can Christian school chaplains use prayer and reflective spaces to help children and young people experience peace?

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss and evaluate whether Christian chaplains can use prayer spaces to help CYPs experience peace and make recommendations to improve current practice. To do this, children's perceptions of the usefulness of the prayer space for finding peace will be assessed, any barriers to helping children find peace through prayer spaces will be identified, and recommendations will be made on the improvement of practice to help children and young people find peace. To answer the research question and aims, an action research project (ARP) was carried out which was chosen for its pragmatic, inductive approach.

This project took place at a primary school in the South East of England where a prayer space was run and then a focus group was conducted. The findings (drawn out of the data through thematic analysis) were as follows. The findings were that children found activities that engaged the senses, used different learning and spiritual styles, and allowed them some flexibility in how they used them were the most helpful in cultivating peace; chaplains are best placed by being safe adults journeying alongside children and young people, while also helping them through interpersonal conflicts; worries changed from imaginative worries to worries about events and relationships as the children grew older; and a sense of calm was very important to the children and young people. The implications of these findings are about the chaplain's intentional approach to peace and prayer spaces, rather than making significant changes to what is practiced. There are also implications for training and research, particularly about supporting children and young people through interpersonal conflicts and the relationship between a sense of calm and long-term peace.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As a practitioner, it appears that young people's worries and sense of anxiety are increasing. It seems that chaplains should be able to combat this problem by facilitating opportunities for children and young people (CYPs) to experience peace. One tool that chaplains may be able to use is prayer spaces. Prayer spaces are currently used in schools by chaplains, churches and other Christians as a spiritual development tool for CYPs. However, there is a lack of research giving specific guidance to chaplains on how to support CYPs to experience peace or cope with their worries. Hence, this research aims to make suggestions for chaplaincy practice that improve how prayer spaces are used. This requires listening to CYPs' opinions about the usefulness of prayer spaces and addressing the barriers that CYPs face when searching for peace. This chapter will introduce the study by outlining the background of the study, the research problem, the aims and objectives and its significance and limitations.

Background of the Study

To explore prayer spaces as a tool for chaplains to use, it is important to first define what they are. It must be noted that this thesis will use the phrase 'prayer spaces', but at the prayer space during this study the phrase 'prayer and reflection space' was used to be more welcoming CYPs of all faiths and none.

Prayer Spaces in Schools, or PSIS is an initiative run by 24-7 Prayer (24-7 Prayer, n.d., n.p.). PSIS run prayer spaces but prayer spaces are not necessarily attached to PSIS (ibid.). This study is not connected with the organisation PSIS, although they were alerted when a prayer space was taking place.

Prayer spaces are usually temporary events (Stern and Shillitoe, 2018, p.5). They create "space[s] in schools where pupils can pause to reflect or pray" (PSIS, 2024a, n.p.). They enable CYPs of all faiths and none to reflect and engage in spirituality and faith (PSIS, 2024b, n.p.; Stern and Shillitoe, 2018, p.5). Prayer spaces are not platforms for proselytisation (PSIS, 2024b, n.p.). "Prayer spaces give children and young people a way to explore personal reflection and prayer for themselves using a selection of engaging and creative activities" (PSIS, 2024a, n.p.). Prayer spaces are set apart, sacred spaces into which young people may choose to engage and encounter God.

A prayer space was run for this study on Wednesday the 31st of January 2024. This was a room of activities that the CYPs were allowed to explore as they chose. There was no set order but most of the activities included written instructions. To carry out the prayer space successfully, two volunteers from a local church also attended the event. Their role was to set up activities, support the CYPs in completing the activities and talk to them about their thoughts and feelings during the prayer space. Throughout the day the entirety of Key Stage 2 engaged in the prayer space. Each class (which was half a year group) was given half an hour to explore and use the activities. These activities had different themes, several of which were focussed on worry or peace (see the activities in Appendix 6).

Prayer spaces are typically used in a spiritual development context, rather than specifically being used to help students find peace. Hence, there is room for exploration in this area.

Research Problem

The impact of chaplains using prayer spaces for the nurturing of peace is important because anxiety is a rising problem for CYPs in the UK which chaplains may be able to help to solve.

“The percentage of young people aged 5-15 with depression or anxiety increased from 3.9% in 2004 to 5.8% in 2017” (MHFAE, 2020, n.p.). “7.2% of 5-19 year olds experience an anxiety condition” (MHFAE, 2020, n.p.). The most likely to experience anxiety today are those aged 16 to 29 years old (Mental Health Foundation, 2023, n.p.). “Anxiety disorders are the most prevalent class of disorder for adults in the United States (Kessler, 2010), yet anxiety disorders are relatively understudied in the stigma literature” (Dietz and Lorona, 2023, p.817). “In 2022/23, an average of 37.1% of women and 29.9% of men reported high levels of anxiety. Compared to data from 2012 to 2015, this has increased significantly from 21.8% of women and 18.3% of men reporting high levels of anxiety” (Mental Health Foundation, 2023, n.p.).

Knowing then that this is a rising issue, developing emotional competence in children should be of concern to all people and services who care for them (Dwivedi, 2004, N.P.). As children grow in self-awareness, they become more able to understand what their emotions are signalling which helps them to plan, problem solve and strategize (ibid.). Where emotional signals are not recognised,

emotions can intensify which leads to the possibility of destructive behaviours (ibid.). A skill necessary for being able to cope with emotions is self-regulation (ibid.). Being taught and finding ways in which to experience emotions without becoming overwhelmed by them is important for children to grow into regulated adults (ibid.).

“Emotion regulation is the most essential component of mental health and requires full attention of any society interested in it. Emotion dysregulation can lead to a variety of mental and personality disorders. Similarly, the development of emotion regulation is influenced by parenting, schooling, psychoeducational and socialising opportunities” (Dwivedi, 2004, N.P.).

There seems to be potential then, that chaplains may be able to help with the issue of anxiety. So for chaplains, the spiritual issue of peace appears to be a solution for the emotional need of worry. Perhaps prayer spaces in particular may be used to help children recognise and regulate their emotions while experiencing deep peace which may combat anxieties and worries.

Aims and Significance of this Study

Consequently, this paper aims to discuss and evaluate whether Christian chaplains can use prayer spaces to help CYPs experience peace and make recommendations to improve current practice. To do this, CYP’s perceptions of the usefulness of the prayer space for finding peace will be assessed, any barriers to helping CYPs find peace through prayer spaces should be identified, and recommendations should be made to improve practice.

This study will contribute to current research by exploring a specific area of knowledge that has not yet been deeply explored (helping CYPs find peace through prayer spaces) and will draw together research from psychology and missiology. This study will use the ideas put forward by CYPs themselves to then make suggestions on how chaplains can effectively improve their practice.

Limitations

Before proceeding, it is important to recognise the limitations of this study. Firstly, this is a small-scale study which is limited in scope. As such this paper will only focus on Christian school chaplains, although the results and recommendations may be useful for chaplains and practitioners of various

contexts and faiths. This study was done in a primary school, however the findings will have some relevance to secondary and further education contexts and perhaps to chaplaincy contexts outside of education. Furthermore, due to the small scale of this project, the differences in regions and socio-economic factors have not been considered. This study was completed in the South East of England with students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. This study is also limited to the impact of prayer spaces on students, not staff. However, future research on helping UK school staff find peace would be incredibly useful and intriguing.

Furthermore, the qualitative nature of this study makes it inherently subjective and therefore the results needed to be interpreted. Hence, there may have been some impact from the background and experiences of this researcher on the interpretation of the results despite attempts to mitigate bias.

Additionally, resources were limited in this study. Lack of budget, room booking availability at the school, time available for this research study and this researcher's lack of prior experience of conducting such studies will have all impacted the way in which this study was conducted.

Structure of the Thesis

In chapter one, the context, aims and limitations of this study have been outlined. Chapter two will be a literature review of current research, specifically looking at inward, outward and upward peace, the impact that spirituality and religion have on wellbeing, and a discussion using Biblical narratives about the chaplain's role and use of prayer spaces. Then, a methodology will be outlined in chapter three. This will explore a pragmatist, inductive action research approach and the research design and limitations will be explained. Chapter four will be a presentation of the findings, while chapter five is a discussion of those findings, comparing them to literature and theology and applying them to practice. Finally, chapter six will conclude the study and present the outcomes and areas for further research.

Declarations

Participants real names have not been used. They have been given pseudonyms to keep them anonymous.

All Bible verses are used in the English Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Because a literature review is a critical investigation into what other people have already said in this area of study (McNiff, 2017, p.105), it is imperative to start looking at current literature on prayer spaces and peace. This will help the action research project to be successful and will help find areas for improvement and review the values which underly practice (ibid., p.116).

Peace

To find peace is to have purpose, belonging, safety, connection, and rest. Jesus discussed peace saying, “peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27). There is something deeply spiritual about the idea of peace. Peace is not synonymous with spirituality, but it is supposed that it is a result of spirituality and spiritual practice.

Thus, it will be helpful to briefly explore what spirituality means. Spirituality is a dynamic growth process (Fisher, 2011, p.20). Spirituality is to do with experiencing feelings and finding value, purpose and meaning (ibid., p.20). Spirituality is difficult to define but is a fundamental part of human experience, dealing with the essence of being human, and may sometimes be equated with religion (ibid., p.18). There are, however, commonalities and differences between spirituality and religion (Fisher, 2011, p.19). Religion might be considered as the rules or ideology of a faith, while spirituality is a relationship with a divine or transcendent source (ibid., p.19). There is a tendency to look within when considering spirituality, but for monotheists in particular it is important to go beyond oneself and look to something other or higher (ibid., p.20). For the Christian chaplain then, a belief in a relationship with the transcendent will be vital when considering peace and the fullness of spiritual wellbeing, but so will a recognition that the belief in God is not necessarily shared by others.

“Spirituality helps individuals to live at peace with themselves, to love (God and)* their neighbor, and to live in harmony with the environment. For some, spirituality involves an encounter with God, or transcendent reality, which can occur in or out of the context of organized religion, whereas for others, it involves no experience or belief in the supernatural. (NB * These words were placed in parentheses as they will be meaningless to those people who do not acknowledge a relationship with God.)” (Fisher, 2011, p.20).

So spirituality has to do with a relationship with the supernatural but also with other people, the environment and oneself. To think about different types of peace, it will be useful to discuss different types of spirituality and apply these ideas to peace. A useful model will be three (or four) dimensional spirituality. The facets of spiritual wellbeing are inward: looking to the self and practising self-examination; outward: looking to community for human connection, or looking to the environment to find a sense of awe and wonder; and upward: looking to God and seeking human-divine relationship (Fisher, 2011, p.21; Fisher, 2010, p.107; Ladd and Spilka, 2006, p.233). Inward, upward and outward spiritualities are distinguishable though inseparable (Fisher, 2010, p.107).

Inward

Inward spiritual formation is the quest to find Christ within oneself, using disciplines of “solitude, silence, prayer, meditation, contemplation, and attentiveness to the movements of our heart” (Nouwen et. al., 2010, p.123). Inward spirituality consists of a search for self-worth and sense of identity through an intra-relationship with oneself where meaning, purpose and values are found through the agent of self-awareness (Fisher, 2010, p.107; Fisher, 2011, p.21).

It is through discovery of the self via discernment and articulation that anxiety and confusion can be dispelled (Nouwen et. al., 2010, p.124). Through discerning and articulating, victimhood is confronted, spiritual battles are named, and space is created within the heart in which the Holy Spirit may be invited to dwell (ibid.). So inner peace is about freedom from victimhood and being empowered to make positive rational decisions that come from a sense of purpose and value.

“The journey inward precedes the journey outward, and the chronology is important” (Nouwen et. al., 2010, p.124). Effective ministry stems from solitude and introspection because one needs to truly know themselves and God and then love others from the love that God has first shown us (ibid., p.124). The inward and outward journeys are difficult paths which require discernment, accountability and community with God and others (ibid., p.124-125).

Outward

Outward spirituality is both interpersonal, demonstrating strong relationships with other people, and environmental, developing a sense of wonder and awe for the physical and biological world (Fisher,

2010, p.107; Fisher, 2011, p.22). The environmental aspect of spirituality goes further than nurture of the biological world, but leads towards a sense of awe and perhaps unity with the world around us (Fisher, 2011, p.22).

Most people will agree that there is a relational aspect to spirituality and spiritual wellbeing (Fisher, 2010, p.115). The Christian view is that outward formation is the discovery of Christ dwelling alongside and dwelling within the world (Nouwen et. al., 2010, p.123). This requires “care, compassion, witness, outreach, healing, accountability, and attentiveness to the movements of other people’s hearts” (Nouwen et. al., 2010, p.123).

The Church’s teaching on peacebuilding is not well or widely known (Hawksley, 2020, p.3). “The “ministry of reconciliation” entrusted to us (2 Cor 5:18) is a key dimension of our Christian vocation and an indispensable part of the Church’s mission and identity” (Hawksley, 2020, p.3). Church teaching must continue to develop in order to take the changing shapes of conflict into account (ibid., p.3). “Peacebuilding is an approach to transforming conflict and creating sustainable peace that encompasses a range of practices aimed at reducing direct violence, increasing justice, and healing the wounds of conflict over the long term” (ibid., p.7).

This sort of peace is not necessarily about whole relationships but about having sought reconciliation, justice, forgiveness and harmony. It is not about avoiding healthy conflict or a passive sort of peace. Peace equated to passivity has been used in the English language in a manner that is unhelpful for the understanding of Biblical peace (Yoder, 1997, p.1). Passivity discourages meaningful discourse and allows those with power to ignore the most vulnerable (ibid., p.2). A clearer way of stating this is that shalom (peace) is the presence of something positive, not the absence of something negative (ibid., p.13). Hence, peace and peace-making is not the absence of conflict, but going through necessary conflict with humility, grace and listening well.

Peace is made (Bonhoeffer, 2015, p.65). Christ’s disciples endured suffering and did not inflict it on others (ibid.). They maintained unity and fellowship (ibid.). They faced hatred and wrongdoing, overcoming evil by demonstrating goodness (ibid.). “The peacemakers will carry the cross with their Lord, for it was on the cross that peace was made” (ibid.).

Furthermore, Paul instructs believers on creating outward peace. “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:14-18).

This passage from Romans describes showing love and compassion to those actively doing harm as well as those who are oppressed. It also suggests that the only thing that is controllable is oneself. Others may reject peace-making attempts. However, if adequate attempts at reconciliation and peace have been made in a manner that blesses and not curses, then one may hold interpersonal peace while still having conflict within relationships.

Upward

Upward spirituality is about relationship with a transcendent being or force who is “the source of Mystery of the universe” (Fisher, 2010, p.107). The spiritual idea of trusting or mistrusting a monotheistic God appears relevant to worry and anxiety (Rosmarin et. al., 2011, p.692). This stems from the ideas of God’s ultimate care for humanity, his omniscience, omnipotence and omnibenevolence (Rosmarin et. al., 2011, p.692).

Trust in God leads to a decreased intolerance of uncertainty which in turn leads to decreased worry (Rosmarin et. al., 2011, p.694). Mistrust in God leads to a significant increased intolerance of uncertainty and worry (ibid., p.694). “Previous research has connected trust in God to lower depression, anxiety and worry, and mistrust in God to higher levels of these symptoms in religious communities” (ibid., p.692).

Worry may be associated with uncertain situations and ambiguity (Rosmarin et. al., 2011, p.692). Hence, responses to uncertainty will affect worry. A worldview which relies on God as positive, good, powerful, and knowledgeable will lead to less need for certainty because one can trust God rather than circumstance (ibid.). “Trust in God may also promote positive spiritual emotions, religious coping, and a sense of connectedness with transcendence, thus increasing tolerance for uncertain

life situations” (ibid.). Conversely, mistrust in God may be associated with increased intolerance of uncertainty which can lead to worry, doubts, and a sense of conflict (ibid.).

Spirituality and religion may be a predictor of psychological functioning (Rosmarin et. al., 2011, p.698). However spirituality and religion are not synonymous and their effects on wellbeing may need to be studied separately (Fisher, 2010, p.106; 2011, p.19). It will be important then, for the Christian chaplain to navigate an individual’s tolerance for uncertainty while remembering that others may not share the same faith or worldview. Core beliefs affect perceptions and automatic thoughts and thus affect emotional responses (Rosmarin et. al., 2011, p.691). An individual’s world view may impact how their spiritual wellbeing may be understood (Fisher, 2010, p.115). Should a person have poor wellbeing in terms of transcendent relationship, it is important to understand whether this individual values the transcendent aspect of spirituality and discover whether they may be experiencing spiritual dissonance (Fisher, 2010, p.115). In other words, how a chaplain supports a practising Christian who is distant from God will differ from how they support an atheist who is distant from God.

In summary, upward peace is a connection to the transcendent and is measured by tolerance for uncertainty. Trust in God or a higher power outside of oneself will increase that tolerance, thereby increasing upward peace.

Holistic Peace

Holistic peace is the convergence of inward, outward and upward peace. To have holistic peace is to have a sense of self-awareness, purpose and values, to have positive social connections and to have intentionally made peace, and to have high tolerance to uncertainty by trusting in God. Inward, outward and upward spiritual formation “belong together to strengthen each other and should never be separated” (Nouwen et. al., 2010, p.123). Fisher discusses “progressive synergism”, describing each of the aspects as vital for holistic wellbeing (Fisher, 2011, p.23).

“The Hebrew word Shalom means “completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord”” (Fisher, 2010, p.108).

Spiritual health is dynamic and based upon intentional self-development and seeking congruence between an internal sense of meaning and purpose, and its external expression (Fisher, 2010, p.107). Ultimate spiritual health may be described as a sense of bliss or harmony which is achieved through personal trial which is the means for self-development (ibid.). Hence, peace is not reliant upon circumstances but is developed *within* and *through* difficult circumstances. It may be argued that finding peace is a self-development skill which is attained through a psychological and spiritual training journey. But the extent to which the chaplain may act as both a spiritual and psychological guide needs to be considered.

Religious input on mental wellbeing

Within Christianity, a person is viewed as whole, and psychological and spiritual facets can be considered distinguishable but inseparable (Watts, 2015, p.140). Although psychology and religion have different approaches and emphases, they are not irreconcilable (ibid., p.140-141). It is unhelpful to view a pastoral issue as solely psychological or solely spiritual because this negates a part of human existence (ibid., p.141). Equally, it is just as unhelpful to oversimplify the cross-section between the fields and view them as one and the same, for example to view mental health issues as demonic possession (ibid., p.141). There needs to be a meaningful dialogue between the fields.

“Religion and spirituality may serve functions such as being a source of meaning, coping, and social community for individuals” (Dietz and Lorona, 2023, p.816). There is a correlation between religion and wellbeing which may be because spiritual practices encourage a sense of belonging, self-worth and purpose (Ladd and Spilka, 2006, p.237). Religion can be associated with positive physical and mental health outcomes (Watts, 2015, p.144).

However, religion can also be associated with poor mental health (Watts, 2015, p.145). Within the sphere of mental health problems, CYPs may experience religious guilt (Nash et al., 2015, p.148). Religious views of anxiety may increase stigma and prevent seeking psychological help (Dietz and Lorona, 2023, p.817). Some people may believe that mental illnesses stem from spiritual issues which may result in coping negatively with a mental health issue (Dietz and Lorona, 2023, p.816). Bible passages such as Philippians 4:6 and Luke 12:22 speak to issues of worry and anxiety which could potentially lead to stigmatisation and clinical anxiety being incorrectly treated as a spiritual issue (Dietz and Lorona, 2023, p.817). Biblical passages may be used to accuse others of not having

enough faith or not finding peace in God (Dietz and Lorona, 2023, p.823). However, “validating challenges and struggles in a religious context may help to destigmatize that experience and increase help-seeking” (Dietz and Lorona, 2023, p.824). The chaplain can offer positive regard and acceptance which will help give CYPs a safe place to recognise their feelings (Nash et al., 2015, p.148).

So, when discussing holistic peace and shalom, there is a concern for wholeness while also a distinction between psychological and spiritual facets of the human being. One model which may be helpful for this consideration is a dual-factor model of mental health and wellbeing.

Mental health is often conflated with wellbeing (Norwich et al., 2022, p.807). This is a single-factor model is considered from healthy to unhealthy wellbeing and mental health (ibid., p.808). Figure 1 was created as a visual aid to help readers understand information about the single-factor model.



Figure 1: Single-factor model of mental health and wellbeing

However, the more useful dual-factor model will consider mental health and wellbeing as separate factors which are related but distinct (Norwich et al., 2022, p.808). This means that wellbeing may be considered somewhat independently from a mental health diagnosis (ibid.). A young person can have high wellbeing while suffering from a mental disorder (ibid.).

This dual-factor model helps define the role of schools and chaplains (who will focus on wellbeing) and mental health services (who will focus on mental health) (Norwich et al., 2022, p.816). Figure 2 was created as a visual aid to help readers understand information about the dual-factor model.

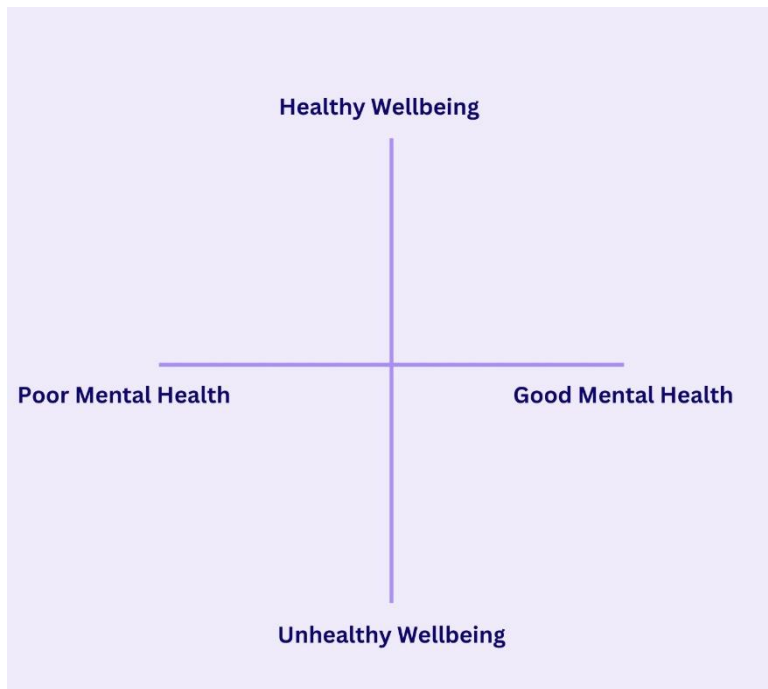


Figure 2: Dual-factor model of mental health and wellbeing

Educational aims (and the aims of the school chaplain) are wellbeing-focused and are “about promoting personal and social wellbeing (covering cognitive, physical personal/emotional, social, moral, spiritual and cultural areas)” (Norwich et al., 2022, p.816). Meanwhile mental health services “are about preventing, coping, helping mental health difficulties” (ibid.). So although the chaplain will have care and concern for the mental health of those they work with, their efforts will be wellbeing-focused. They will signpost to and cooperate with mental health services, rather than attempting to ‘fix’ mental health issues.

Developing a biblical and pastoral response then will be key for chaplains to be able to work well with students who are experiencing mental health and emotional wellbeing issues.

Theology of Peace

Peace as a Gift

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

Yaconelli writes about the reality of God's love which cannot be forced or created but can only be received as a gift (2006, p.44-45). "Jesus invites us to trust that underneath our anxious striving, beneath our worry and life-management strategies there is the reality of God's love" (Yaconelli, 2006, p.43). Christ's peace is "a sense of pardoned sin, a living Saviour, and a home in heaven" (Ryle, 2012, p.67). God is able to freely give grace through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus and by this grace, humans have the capacity to see their own need and receive this gift (Hawksley, 2020, p.43). For Christians, the knowledge of Christ taking on sin on the cross and raising to life again provides peace through a sense of inward purpose which is to follow Christ, a sense of outward peace through being compelled to make peace with others, and upward peace which is reconciliation with God. Peace is Christ's gift and his legacy which is inherited by believers (Ryle, 2012, p.65-66).

The chaplain must further consider a biblical model of the chaplain as a guide or accompanier to discover how best to help others to live a peace-filled life.

Jairus' Daughter and the Bleeding Woman

One such biblical narrative is found in Mark 5:21-45 and Luke 8:40-56 where Jesus imparts peace and healing to Jairus' daughter and the bleeding woman.

Jairus was on a journey with Jesus, being accompanied by him. This journey may be seen as a metaphor for spiritual growth and a moment of encounter which made God known within a moment of vulnerability (Williams, 2018, p.20). Unlike the journey with Jairus, however, chaplains often do not learn the end of the story, but accompany for a time (ibid.).

Jesus acted as a non-anxious presence within times of uncertainty, bringing peace through his sense of calm and through miraculous healing. To be non-anxious is a conscious response rather than reaction (Steinke, 2006, n.p.). It is to focus on one's own inward state and to positively influence others (ibid.). A non-anxious presence is not aloof, but rather engaged and aware, seeing discomfort and pain yet not letting hurt or anxiety drive one's own behaviour (ibid.). Hence, to be non-anxious,

one must be aware of one's own anxiety or potential causes of anxiety (ibid.). A non-anxious presence will remain calm, control reactions and responses, and tolerate uncertainty (ibid.).

This is exactly how Jesus responded when he encountered the bleeding woman while journeying with Jairus. It may be suggested that the woman would have been seen as ritually unclean and therefore should not have touched Jesus' garment or been in the crowd (Harris, 2021, p.123-124). The woman may have been made increasingly unwell by her bleeding but also will have been socially excluded because of her bleeding (ibid., p.117). Yet, the woman reaches out to touch the hem of Jesus' garment and participated in her own healing by God using her faith (Harris, 2021, p.128). Jesus asked who touched him as power went from him which was costly to him (Williams, 2018, p.20). Then Jesus calls her out, restoring her place within society and providing shalom which is spiritual, bodily and social wholeness (ibid., p.128-129).

Jesus saw this woman with love and brought transformation. The chaplain's role is transformation which is "about learning to see with the eyes of Jesus" (Yaconelli, 2006, p.71). "When we seek to be contemplatively present to young people we seek to see them through eyes of love" (ibid., p.72), just as Jesus saw this woman. It is easy to not fully or deeply listen to others, but Yaconelli imagines what it would be like if youth ministry was about deeply hearing young people (ibid., p.74). When the chaplain sees and hears CYPs, they will be compassionately moved by their pain and their joy (ibid., p.76-79). Then because the young person is viewed through compassionate eyes, acts of kindness follow and God's love is embodied (ibid., p.79). Pastoral accompaniment may foster belonging, forgiveness, care, accountability and resilience within individuals and a community (Hawksley, 2020, p.83).

The Chaplain and Prayer Spaces

Because this is a journey, the chaplain may act as a guide for others through calm and turmoil. The chaplain is a pastoral accompanier, journeying with others. Care is all about presence and includes active listening, hospitality and honouring the individual's faith perspective while having integrity for one's own beliefs (Baker, 2021, p.44-45).

Chaplains promote cooperation and unity amongst people of all faiths and none (Baker, 2021, p.96). Chaplains do not proselytize, coerce individuals to partake in faith-related activities or force someone to hold to a particular set of religious beliefs (ibid., p.97). Instead, it is important to find common ground and build trusting relationships of mutual respect (ibid., p.156). Through openness to questions and challenge, chaplains reveal their hope in God (Williams, 2018, p.6). They embody their faith and represent it in a way that is relevant, visible, accessible and engaged with the institution (ibid.).

The incarnational model of chaplaincy is an expression of Christ's love and care for others through engaging with the community of the institution and pastoral encounters with individuals (Williams, 2018, p.17). It is worth assessing whether prayer spaces may be a reasonable part of the chaplain's role.

Students describe prayer spaces as a chance to be introspective (Stern and Shillitoe, 2018, p.10). Stern and Shillitoe found that prayer spaces helped students to relate to themselves and concluded that schools would benefit from opportunities for stress reduction in students (ibid., p.2). "This was a complex and significant influence, especially with respect to stress, guilt, and becoming a better person" (ibid., p.2). The theme of de-stressing was discussed by pupils and adults (ibid., p.11). They commented that the prayer space helped them to feel calm and to forgive themselves (ibid., p.11-12). Some pupils talked of an emptied and quiet mind (ibid., p.13). Prayer spaces then are a gift which the chaplain may utilise when accompanying CYPs through calm and turmoil.

Stern and Shillitoe have evaluated prayer spaces as a means of spiritual development (Stern and Shillitoe, 2018, p.5-6). This research project has clear similarities but differs from Stern and Shillitoe's work because it looks specifically at helping young people experience peace. This may be seen as a factor of spiritual development rather than spiritual development as a whole.

Chapter Summary

In summary, the chaplain is concerned with peace as a spiritual facet of human functioning, though it overlaps with mental health and wellbeing. As a non-clinical role, the chaplain will be more concerned with the wellbeing factor and will refer to mental health practitioners for clinical issues. In

particular, the chaplain can consider the inward, outward and upward measures of peace and can help others to explore these three areas. This happens within the context of incarnational ministry where the chaplain is journeying alongside others just as Jesus journeyed alongside Jairus. This journeying requires a recognition that religion may have a positive or negative impact on the individual that they are working with. Therefore, an empowering and positive regard is needed to model faith, rather than force or coerce an individual into exploring faith. As such, chaplaincy and prayer spaces are a gift which may be utilised or rejected by the institution or individuals within it. If used by the individual, it appears that prayer spaces will be effective for spiritual exploration and thus for experiencing peace.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research aims to explore how prayer spaces can be used to help students find peace. To do this, the children's perceptions of the usefulness of the prayer space for finding peace should be assessed, any barriers to helping children find peace through prayer spaces should be identified, and recommendations should be made on the improvement of practice in order to help CYPs find peace. In order to fulfil these objectives, a clear methodology needs to be laid out.

Research philosophy

Firstly, it will be helpful to consider a research philosophy in order to decide a way in which the research will be conducted. Therefore, positivist, post-positivist, interpretivist and pragmatist philosophies will be briefly discussed.

Firstly, the positivist view is that objectivity is possible and that the world does not need to be viewed through the lens of the individual (Hammond and Wellington, 2021, p.148). Positivists often use deductive methods (drawing conclusions from initial scientific premises) to look at cause and effect, studying why people act the way that they do (ibid., p.53-55, 149). However, humans are complex social beings, so social science studies following natural science procedures may not be effective (ibid., p.149).

Secondly, post-positivism is best described not as ideas after positivism but as an approach which accepts some positivist claims but with the understanding that research may be fallible and conclusions may be based on probability rather than absolute fact (Hammond and Wellington, 2021, p.150). Post-positivism rejects relativism and has roots in positivism but realises the need for recognising and disclosing subjectivity and bias (ibid., p.150). Karl Popper is looked to as a post-positivist for his approach (ibid., p.150). Popper built on previous research and conclusions but realised the need to generate and test new theories, not just rely on old ones (ibid., p.150).

Next, interpretivism aims to understand the participants' sense of meaning which is drawn from practice or culture (Hammond and Wellington, 2021, p.105). Some interpretivists emphasise that the world is always viewed through a personal lens and that the world can never be objectively viewed and that intentions need to be understood (ibid., p.106). In essence, generalisations are unhelpful,

but sense can only be made of actions if the underlying cultural rules and practices are understood (ibid., p.107). Interpretivism would also state that meaning is not fixed but is constantly sought (ibid., p.107). Hence, it will explore concepts in a small-scale, in-depth interview and offer an exploratory approach to literature, rather than proffering and seeking to prove hypotheses of universal truths (ibid., p.107).

Finally, pragmatism takes the view that in order to generate understanding, there needs to be testing (Hammond and Wellington, 2021, p.154). This may take the form of either qualitative or quantitative methods and is usually in the form of an inductive analysis method (ibid., p.154), which is a “bottom-up approach concerned with identifying patterns within the data” and drawing conclusions from observations (ibid., p.101). But pragmatism primarily focuses on testing in order to find knowledge, and realising that that knowledge may be fallible (ibid., p.154). Pragmatism is about finding solutions to problems rather than being concerned with questions of ontology and whether knowledge and reality exist (ibid., p.154).

This research project is concerned with hearing the voices of CYPs and drawing out key principles from their ideas and thoughts which will practically impact practice. This may require creative and flexible approaches to discover the viewpoints of the CYPs and make recommendations for chaplains. This focuses on improving practice rather than proving or disproving a theory or fully understanding the interpretations of the children to the social world. It will explore and apply the ideas given by the CYPs rather than seek to raise ethical or social justice issues (to which an interpretivist approach would lend itself). Hence, a pragmatist approach seems apt for this project.

Through a small-scale, in-depth study using an inductive, pragmatist approach, it becomes clear that the best method for this study is a primarily qualitative one. This will allow for images and photographs of the children’s interactions with the prayer space to be used in this study (Hammond and Wellington, 2021, p.155). The children’s thoughts and ideas will be recorded qualitatively but may be coded and analysed quantitatively to more easily recognise and describe themes and patterns (ibid., p.156). This fits well with an action research project (ARP). Pragmatism is also seen as the basis for action research (AR) due to the foundational ideas that learning happens through experience and that research methods should be fit for purpose (ibid., p.155).

Action Research

AR uses an iterative cycle of action and reflection to address a problem (Hammond and Wellington, 2021, p.4). It is for the flourishing of a community and the individuals within it and is concerned with solving problems and expanding practical knowledge which is an evolving and collaborative process (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014, p.5), empowering practitioners to research and investigate praxis and help align it with their values (McNiff, 2017, p.10). AR “seeks to directly improve practice for the better” (Hammond and Wellington, 2021, p.5), and applies to all fields (McNiff, 2017, p.9; Hammond and Wellington, 2021, p.5). Good AR will challenge and bring change to an organisation or to common practice within a field (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014, p.16).

AR is about elevating practice, making it more efficient and successful while also adding value to the field of research (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014, p.6). This is particularly relevant in this case because the objectives of this research study are to assess children’s perceptions of the usefulness of the prayer space for finding peace, identify any barriers to helping children find peace through prayer spaces, and make recommendations on the improvement of practice in order to help CYPs find peace. Thus, AR’s focus on adding value to the research field while improving practice is totally aligned with the objectives of this study.

AR may be understood within first, second and third-person categories (McNiff, 2017, p.15). First-person AR is to inquire into one’s own practice; second-person AR focuses on mutual concern; third-person AR is about the wider community of practitioners but is impersonal (ibid.). This study is a second-person ARP as its findings will be relevant both to the researcher and to other chaplains.

The distinction between AR and reflective practice is that AR is reflection which is founded on research which demands accountability and improvement, while reflective practice may perhaps be reflection with no action (McNiff, 2017, p.16).

The challenge of AR is that there is no set reflection pattern and so with its adaptability comes a ‘messiness’ and the challenge of describing it (Hammond and Wellington, 2021, p.5). There are, however, some models which may be of use. The action-reflection cycle “observe – reflect – act – evaluate – modify – move in new directions” is typically used as the structure onto which cyclical AR

is built (McNiff, 2017, p.12). Coghlan and Brannick use constructing – action planning – taking action – evaluating action (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014, p.11). These cycles are both useful and could be seen as somewhat interchangeable. However, the former appears more practical as it focuses on modifying and planning further action rather than solely evaluating, this is important for AR.

Time Horizon

Due to the limitations of this paper, this was a cross-sectional study, not a longitudinal study. A longitudinal study would have given the opportunity to interview the participants on multiple occasions and allows researchers to analyse what has happened over time, rather than needing to speculate about what might happen (Hammond and Wellington, 2021, p.120, 122). However, a longitudinal study takes up time and resources which were not available in this case. It would have involved finding a time to speak to these five students again, finding a volunteer to be present for safeguarding reasons and booking a room in the school as well as needing more time to analyse and compare data collected between the interviews. Unfortunately, this was impossible in this case, but the long-term impact of prayer spaces would be significant to study in the future.

Collection of Data

Data was collected from three sources. Firstly, data was collected from the prayer space itself. This includes images of the prayer space activities and images of the children's writing at the various stations.

Secondly, a focus group was conducted on the day after the prayer space. It was voice recorded through an app called 'Recorder' which generated a transcript which can be exported to a Google Document (see Appendix 2). This automatically generated transcript was then edited to have a clear layout (rather than a block of text) and be accurate to what this interviewer and the CYPs said.

Finally, at the end of each prayer space session, the CYPs were asked 'what did you think of this prayer and reflection space?'. The answers to this question were written down by a volunteer who was at the prayer space. However, these answers were not voice recorded and it is possible that some bias may have come through in how the volunteer recorded these answers (for example, only writing down positive comments). The accuracy of these notes cannot be tested. Therefore, these

notes have been analysed but shall not be relied upon. Conclusions will not be drawn from these findings. They may only be used to back up other data.

Sampling Strategy for the Focus Group

Theoretically, asking for the perspectives in a series of one-to-one interviews of a random sample of students would be the best method to get the closest reflection of all the student's viewpoints. Having one-to-one interviews would mean that the CYPs could give honest opinions without being influenced by others. Although any given sample is unlikely to be completely representative, a random sample would give the greatest chance of achieving the best representation possible.

However, in this case, there were practical considerations to account for. Firstly and most importantly, safeguarding needed to be considered. In order to keep myself and the children safe and make sure that excellent safeguarding practice was being followed, a second DBS checked adult needed to be in the room while interviews were being conducted. The lack of availability of a second adult in the school setting, as well as room-booking issues severely limited the time available to conduct the interviews. This meant that doing one-to-one interviews would not be possible in the school and that a focus group needed to be done instead.

As a result, a convenience sample was chosen. These children were chosen by the headmistress of children who were willing to participate, whose parents or carers had completed a consent form, and who were able to take the time to participate in the research. The headteacher chose five students from years 5 and 6. She chose very respectful and conscientious participants, who listened well and let one another talk, and who built on each other's ideas. This was helpful to the flow of the focus group and made it easy to ensure that everybody contributed but may have led to some bias or skew. Focus groups can lead to a wide variety of responses and will allow participants to ask questions of each other or remember issues because they are raised by fellow participants (Dawson, 2019, p.24). The group setting may also help participants to feel more comfortable (ibid.). However, the opposite may be true. Some participants may not feel comfortable in a group setting which may lead to some participants not contributing (ibid.). Furthermore, viewpoints may be contaminated by other people's opinions or they may struggle to put forth a differing opinion (ibid.).

It was notable that these participants were incredibly positive in their views, even when encouraged to suggest things they did not like or things to improve. This made finding areas to improve practice more difficult.

A semi-structured interview was conducted which allowed for questions to be asked, but appropriate follow-up to also be included (see questions asked in Appendix 5) This made the interview style more informal and comfortable for the participants.

Analysis Method:

The time horizon restrictions made an iterative approach to collection and analysis (such as would be seen in grounded theory) unattainable. So, it was important to find an analysis method that works for qualitative data collected at a single point in time, and uses an inductive method, allowing conclusions to be drawn from the data.

Thematic analysis

“Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). Thematic analysis can be used flexibly as it is independent from an epistemology (ibid., p.78).

Thematic analysis is inductive, meaning that themes arise from the data rather than imposed by the researcher (Dawson, 2019, p.105). Thematic analysis is seen to highlight recurring and emerging themes within a data set, but this can be unhelpful because interpretation is needed in order to recognise ‘emerging’ themes, leading to bias (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.80). The choices made by the researcher in thematic analysis should be thought through and explicitly discussed (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.81-82).

These themes often arise during the data collection process (Dawson, 2019, p.105). However, due to the nature of the different data collection methods and the lack of clear themes that arose during the collection process, it became clear that the data needed to be coded and analysed in order to group it accurately. Therefore, the categories discussed were not from themes noticed during

collection but from the content itself. In an Excel spreadsheet, the data was cut down into excerpts and any notable category was logged under a code. These codes were then logged under wider themes (see Appendix 2).

Although these codes came from the content of the data, they have still been categorised into general themes rather than being categorised under specific textual words and phrases. In this case, the particular words that the children will use could vary greatly. It is unlikely that the children will use the exact same words and phrases to explain their experience. Therefore, thematic analysis will be a more useful tool than content or textual analysis to explore the children's feedback.

Ethical Considerations:

Throughout this research project, measures were taken to follow ethical considerations. This project was given ethical approval by Birmingham Newman University (see Appendix 1). Ethical issues were considered and modified. So for example, this study focusses on helping CYPs find peace, rather than going into depth about their worries and anxieties.

The school where this study took place was informed of who this researcher is, why this research was taking place, what was going to happen and how data would be used. A gatekeeper from the school then completed a consent form. Parents and carers as well as participants were also informed of the purposes of this research and how it was going to be carried out and how the data would be used (for this dissertation). Each participant and a parent or carer completed a consent form. Participants in the focus group were also given the right to withdraw (as were their parents and carers). Participants, parents and carers, and the gatekeeper were also informed about how data would be stored and when it would be destroyed to protect their personal information.

Chapter 4: Results

In order to identify how chaplains might be able to use prayer spaces to help CYPs experience peace, a prayer and reflection space was run for students in key stage 2 of a Church of England primary school in the South East of England on the 31st January 2024. A thematic analysis of this data was produced and will be presented below.

An analysis of the focus group shows strong themes of activities from the prayer space or activities that the children find helpful when seeking peace; relationships, which can be further categorised into positive and negative comments; and feelings and emotions.

Theme	n of participants contributing to this code (N=5)	n of transcript excerpts assigned to theme
Physical Spaces	5	17
Retreat	4	7
Relationships	5	33
Feelings & Emotions	5	51
Helpful Activities	5	39
Miscellaneous	5	15

Table 1: Thematic analysis summary from the focus group

The focus group consisted of four female students and one male student all from school years 5 or 6. Three of the students self-identified as white-British, and two as black-Nigerian. Two students identified as Christian, two students identified as non-religious and the other student said that they were unsure.

After each year group engaged in the prayer space, the children were given a brief opportunity to provide verbal feedback about the space. This was done as a whole group. One of the volunteers wrote down the comments from the children. The question asked of the CYPs was ‘what did you think of the prayer space?’

Theme	n of times codes within the theme was recorded
Physical Spaces	1
Retreat	0
Relationships	3
Feelings & Emotions	26
Helpful Activities	9
Miscellaneous	1

Table 2: Analysis summary from verbal feedback on the day of the prayer space

These tables show the number of times each theme was mentioned within the focus group or within the conversations at the end of the prayer space sessions. Feelings and emotions were mentioned the most in both cases. This data was very clear and useful and is particularly significant, so will be presented at the end. The next most mentioned themes in both cases were helpful activities and relationships.

Finding 1 – Theme of The Most Helpful Activities

Considering that the prayer space was focussed around creative activities (see appendix 6), and that a question was asked at the focus group about which activities the CYPs found most helpful, it is

unsurprising that specific activities was a common theme to be analysed. However, it will be interesting to analyse the distinctiveness of those described by the CYPs as the most helpful activities.

In the verbal feedback after the sessions, the motion bubbler (appendix 6.21) and playdough (appendix 6.10) were mentioned the most frequently. Interestingly, these were the two activities which did not have instructions but the children could freely use. The motion bubblers were visual, and the playdough was both tactile and had a scent which the children liked. Every group was observed using these two stations in the same way: the playdough activity was a space where students would sit in a group and talk together while moulding the playdough in their hands, while the motion bubblers were watched in stillness and silence.

Specific Prayer Space Activities from 31/01/24	
Code	n of times code was recorded
Worry Monster	0
Card Making	0
Fizzy Forgiveness	0
Postcards	1
Hearts	1
Motion Bubbler	3
Labyrinth	0
Mirror / What would Jesus say about me	1
Describing a friend	0
Playdough	3

Table 3: Activities mentioned from verbal feedback on the day of the prayer space

“The playdough made me feel relaxed and got all my stress out” – quote from child in year 4.



Figure 3: Photograph of playdough station at the prayer and reflection space

The children in the focus group discussed several of the prayer space activities as well as some activities that they thought would be useful but that were not included in the prayer and reflection space. Interestingly, the activities from the prayer and reflection space that were most frequently mentioned were the worry monster (appendix 6.06) and the motion bubbler. Because this study was inspired by the issue of worry, it was predictable that the worry monster activity was important to the children but the motion bubbler was more surprising.

Theme: Helpful Activities			
Specific Prayer Space Activities from 31/01/24		Other Helpful Activities	
Code	n of transcript excerpts assigned to code	Code	n of transcript excerpts assigned to code
Worry Monster	3	Fidget Toys	3
Card Making	1	Music	3
Fizzy Forgiveness	2	Crafts	3
Postcards	2	Prayer	3
Hearts	2	Positive Words	3
Motion Bubbler	3	Bible	1
Labyrinth	1	Visual Images	1
Mirror / What would Jesus say about me	0	Holding Something Mindfully	1
Describing a friend	1	Walking	2
Playdough	2	Hobbies	2

Table 4: Helpful activities described by the focus group

Both groups discussed the motion bubblers as an activity which they found helpful. These were on the carpet with cushions with no instructions given on how to use them. The motion bubblers were a highly popular activity, particularly with the male students.



Figure 4: Photograph of two students in year 5 using the motion bubblers with faces blurred out for anonymity

“They’re almost asleep. I’ve never seen those boys so calm and relaxed” – Quote from year 4 teacher.

The worry monster activity gave the children an opportunity to write down their worries and let the monster ‘eat’ their worries.

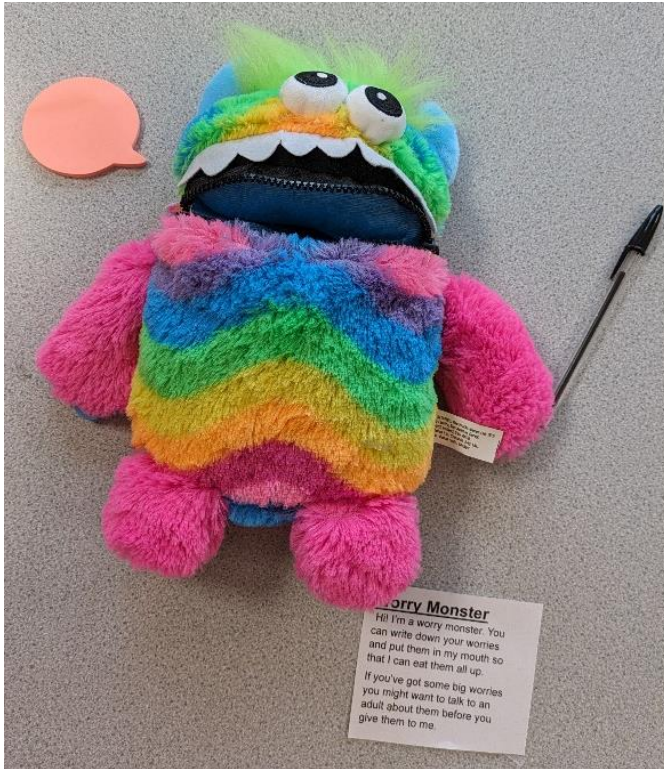


Figure 5: Photograph of the worry monster activity

The children's worries were read and sorted into the themes of imaginative worries (creepy dolls, clowns, etc.), events (moving house, doing a sporting competition, etc.), relationships (family, friendships, etc.) and themselves (healthy eating, feeling angry, etc.).

This activity was anonymous. However, after each group had been to the prayer space, their worries were set aside so that where any safeguarding concerns were raised, the worry could be given to a designated safeguarding lead with the knowledge of which class the child was in and what their handwriting looks like.

The specific worries raised by the children during this activity shall be discussed in the feelings emotions section of this chapter (under Finding 3).

The other activities that the children mentioned the most were fidget toys, music, drawing and crafts, prayer and using positive words. Notably, these activities use the senses sight, sound and touch. Perhaps the use of these three senses (or all five senses) is helpful in aiding the children in a pursuit of peace.

Finding 2 – Relationships

For these children, there was a clear connection between relationships and finding peace.

In the focus group, questions were steered to focus on inward peace and away from relational (or outward) peace. However, the children consistently brought up friendships, family, teachers and classmates, and the topic of war. This demonstrates that for these children, inward and outward peace are not only related but inseparable, and that one will affect the other. It shows that it is difficult to have peace during times of conflict, but that there may be things that can be done to help.

Dotty: “Um, I only want to talk about it briefly, but I in year five, I um struggled and for a few weeks, with someone in my class. They weren’t being very kind to me a lot. And like, so, I really enjoyed going down to [wellbeing team member’s] office. And just, she would like go on walks with me. And like, and I could just sit there and just like, because she has like lots of things in her new room, and like, just sit there and like, talk through it and not like being rushed to get back to class.”

Dotty described the difficulty of a friendship and the helpfulness of a safe adult who offered her a safe place to go and a listening ear during a tough time.

The data from the focus group shows a more negative than positive view of friendships but a very positive view of safe adults.

Theme: Relationships							
		n of transcript excerpts assigned to code from each participant					Total n of transcript excerpts assigned to code
		Alice	Betty	Callum	Dotty	Eleanor	
Codes	Sense of Belonging	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Teachers	2	0	2	2	0	6
	Other Safe Adults	2	1	0	1	1	5
	Helpful Friendships	1	1	0	1	0	3
	Disruptive Classmates	0	2	1	1	3	7
	Friendship Issues and Conflicts	3	0	1	3	0	7
	War	2	2	0	0	0	4

Table 5: Number of times participants discussed each code in the ‘relationships’ theme

When discussing relationships, Betty said that the prayer space volunteers: “came over and like they’d talk to you about like what activity and what one you like the most. And to talk to someone, like just random like, you know, like a new friend but like, you don’t know, like a new friend, but in a different way.”

This data shows the impact safe adults can have but also the significance of disruptive classmates and friendship issues which will be discussed later.

Finding 3 – The Theme of Feelings and Emotions



Figure 6: A word cloud generated from the feelings and emotions described by the children during verbal feedback after each session and during the focus group

The emotions and feelings discussed at the focus group included feeling calm and feeling at peace.

Theme: Feelings and Emotions							
		n of transcript excerpts assigned to code from each participant					
		Alice	Betty	Callum	Dotty	Eleanor	Total n of transcript excerpts assigned to code
Codes	Calm	4	1	5	5	4	19
	Peace	0	1	3	3	2	9
	Happy	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Perseverance	0	2	0	0	0	2
	Busy Mind	0	0	0	2	1	3
	Overwhelmed	2	0	0	0	0	2
	Grief	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Worry	4	0	0	1	0	5
	Sad	0	1	0	0	1	2
	Other	0	2	1	1	3	7

Table 6: Number of times participants discussed each code in ‘feelings and emotions’ theme

The ‘other’ emotions included feeling down, stress, boredom, and anger.

The verbal feedback on the day produced slightly different results, with the most discussed being calm, relaxed, happy and angry.

Theme: Feelings/Emotions		
		n of times code was recorded
Code	Calm	4
	Relaxed	4
	Feeling Peace	2
	Happy	4
	Perseverance	0
	Busy Mind	0
	Overwhelmed	0
	Grief	0
	Worry / Anxiety	3
	Stress	3
	Anger	4
	Sad	0
	Other Feelings / Emotions	2

Table 7: Data on feelings and emotions from verbal feedback at the end of the sessions

Almost all of the comments about worry, stress and anger were all about how the prayer space had helped them with those emotions. The other two comments were the children describing how they generally feel.

Feeling calm (peaceful and relaxed)

In the focus group, feeling calm and peaceful were undoubtedly the most discussed feelings and emotions, followed by the topic of worry. When asked what it means to have peace, one of the children described it this way.

Dotty: Maybe like when and your head's not like running around and like filled with like loads of worries. You're just thinking about where like in the present and not thinking about something things that like worrying about tomorrow or yesterday.

Interviewer: Is that, is that easy or is that difficult to find that sort of piece?

Dotty: Sometimes difficult, depending on things that have happened to you recently. Then it might be easier if you've had quite calm weeks at school. I know, like, especially in year six some people could find it is quite stressful of like the tests and stuff. So like it's really nice, it's really nice to actually find peace, not just saying oh I have peace. Like actually knowing that you do.

For Dotty, the gift of time to rest and have respite was important. It did not change her circumstances that she had upcoming exams and classwork to do but offered her a space to process what she was experiencing or to think about something else for a time.

One activity in which this processing could happen was a large sheet of paper on a table with two questions written down: 'what might it mean to have peace' and 'what does peace feel like?' This piece of paper was not changed out between year groups so the differences between age groups cannot be analysed. It is possible, therefore, that comments may have been influenced by previous comments left by other year groups.



Figure 7: Photograph of a student at the ‘what might it mean to have peace?’ station

The most common theme was feelings and emotions. One of the questions was “what does peace feel like?”, so it is unsurprising that feelings made up half of the comments.

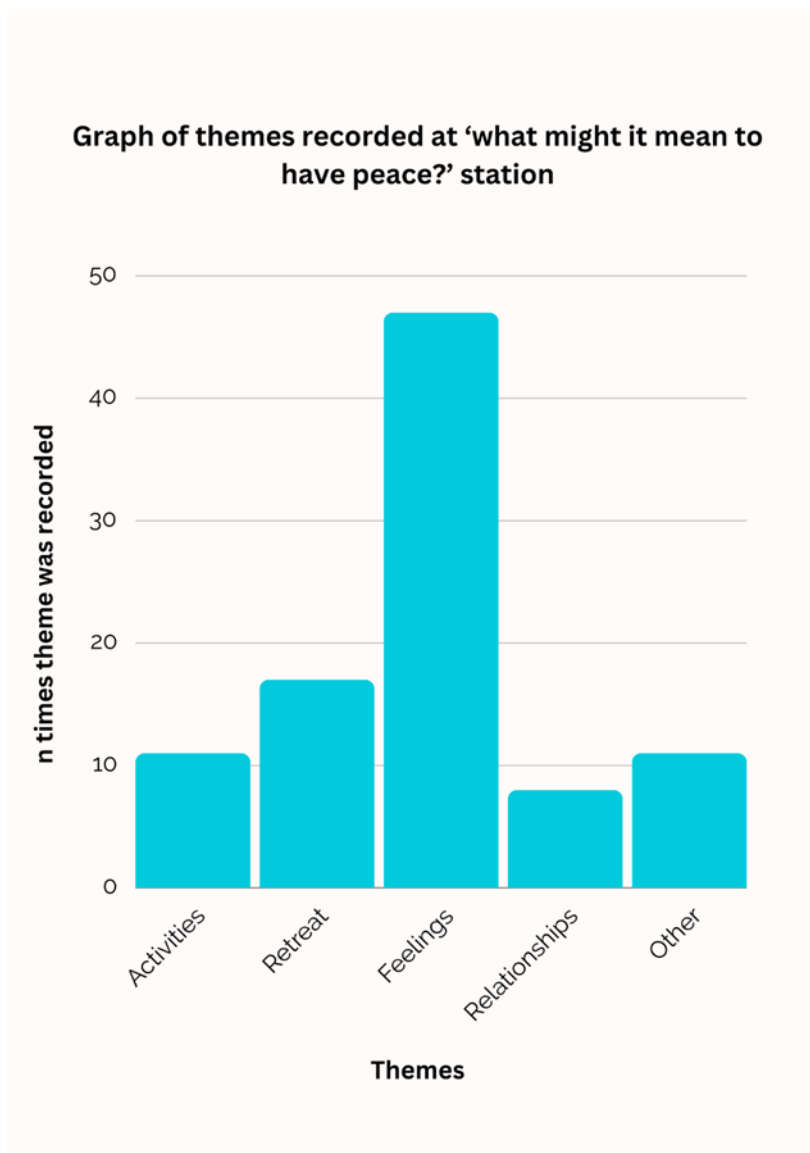


Figure 8: Graph of themes of answers given by the children to the question, 'what might it mean to have peace?'

Consistent with the focus group, the theme of calm was very high showing that the children correlated the feeling of calm with peace. The idea of love was also high. This suggests some relational aspect to peace.

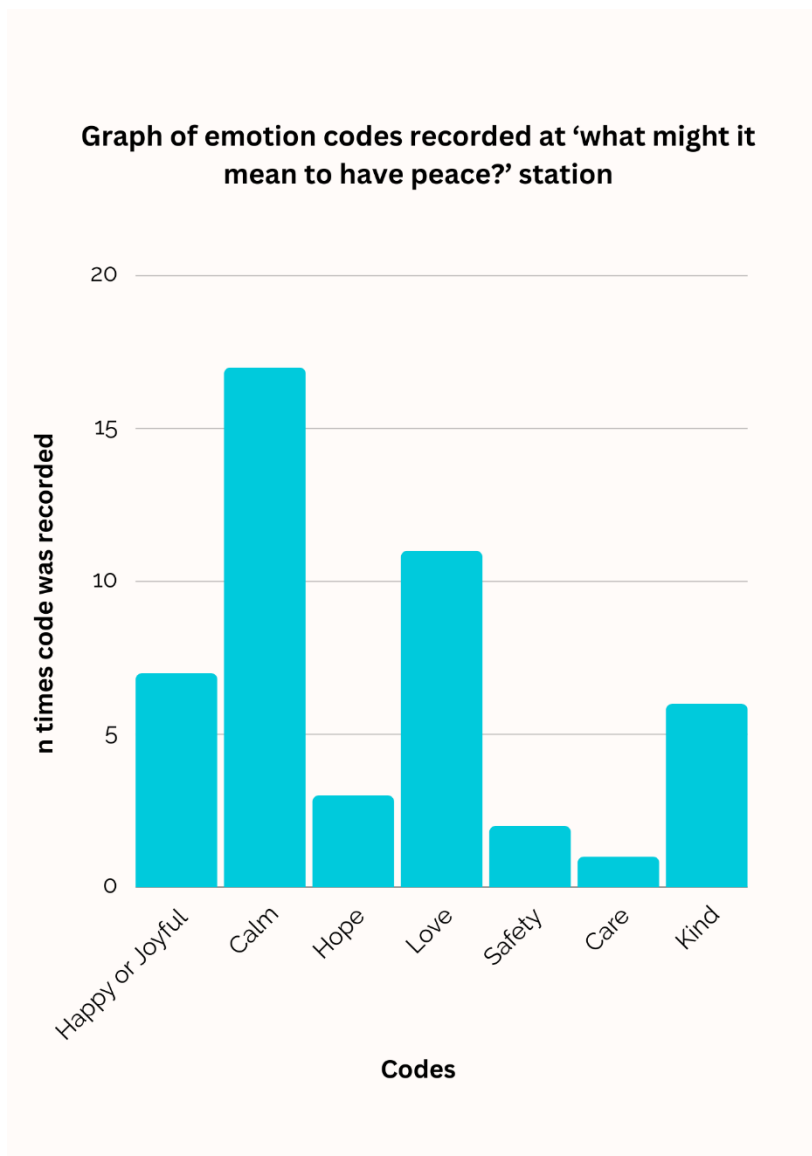


Figure 9: Graph of the feelings (codes) described by the children to the question, ‘what might it mean to have peace?’

Retreat and Spiritual Peace

After calm, the next most common theme was retreat which consisted of solitude, stillness, to relax, heaven, and quiet. Of those codes, to relax and to be quiet were the most popular. Within this category, some distinctly spiritual ideas were posed by the children.

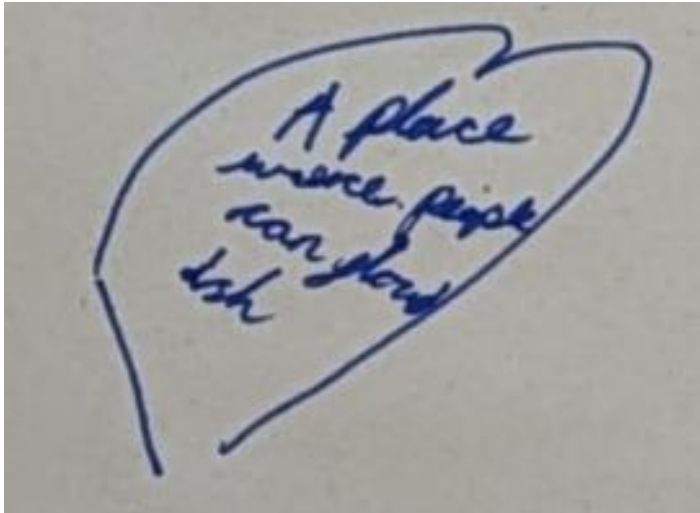


Figure 10: Photograph of a student's writing stating that peace is "A place [where] people can [flourish]"

This quote is a reminder of John 10:10, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full". Peace is a part of a full and flourishing life. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and a gift which is given by God.

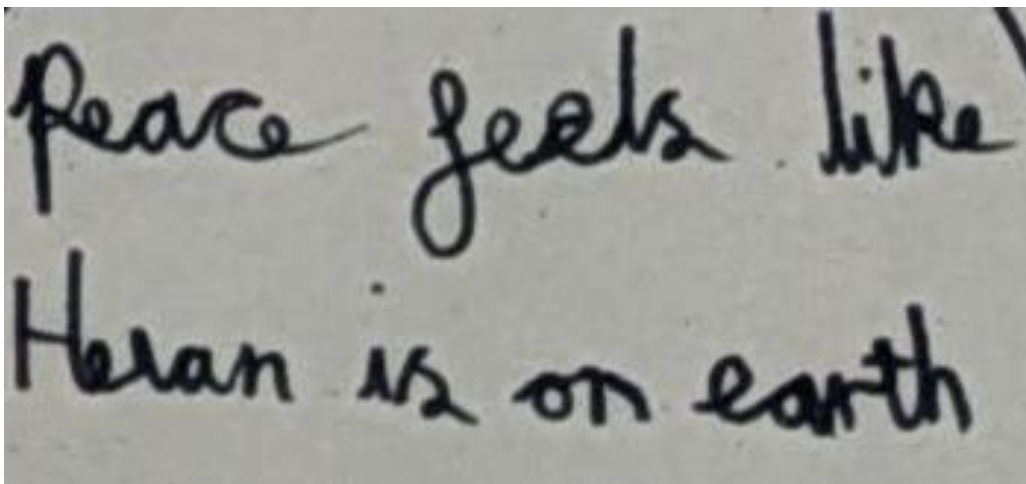


Figure 11: Photograph of a student's writing stating that "peace feels like [heaven] is on earth"

This child's statement is a reminder that peace is a spiritual experience as well as a psychological one. It is a reminder of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Matthew 4:17 says, "From that time Jesus began

to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand””. The chaplain carries a message of hope by representing Christ through an incarnational model.

Another child made a similar comparison between peace and faith.

Callum: And, and faith, faith can also, can also, like, because you're praying and you and you want to have peace, fai- faith can, can, can be peace itself.

Interviewer: Interesting, ok, what do you mean by faith can be peace?



Callum: Um, it can be, um, I mean that like that, that some people, they, they like pray on like a quiet place and quiet places are normally calm. And just they're like peaceful.

Faith can be peace itself. To have faith is to trust in something outside of oneself. And perfect peace is wholeness. To have faith is to trust, lean on God and be spiritually whole. This beautiful statement does not negate suffering but gives hope that even in suffering, peace can be found through faith.

Callum continued to discuss prayer in further depth, noting that naturally believers will seek out the quiet and calm places to pray, just as Jesus did.

Worries

At the beginning and end of the prayer space a blob tree was used to help determine how the children were feeling before and after the sessions (Wilson and Long, 2005, n.p.). When asked about her feelings about the prayer space, Betty said that at the end of the session “I ended up at the right top... Because I thought like all my worries had gone and I was just like the boss of my worries”.

Child	Blob Before	Reason	Blob After	Reason
Betty		Bas- because like I wasn't really sure. But I knew like it was like when I heard about like it was a peace like a reflective thing and I thought like I think I'm going to like this.		And then I ended up at the right top... Because I thought like all my worries had gone and I was just like the boss of my worries.

(Images from: Wilson and Long, 2005, n.p.)

Table 8: A child in the focus group explains why they chose each 'blob person' before and after the prayer space

During the worry monster activity (appendix 5.06) each year group wrote down a relatively similar number of worries, ranging from 18 to 27 worries. The most discussed themes were secondary school, friendships and family or home life. At least one child from each year group mentioned secondary school which might sometimes be wrongfully considered an issue that is only relevant to year 6.

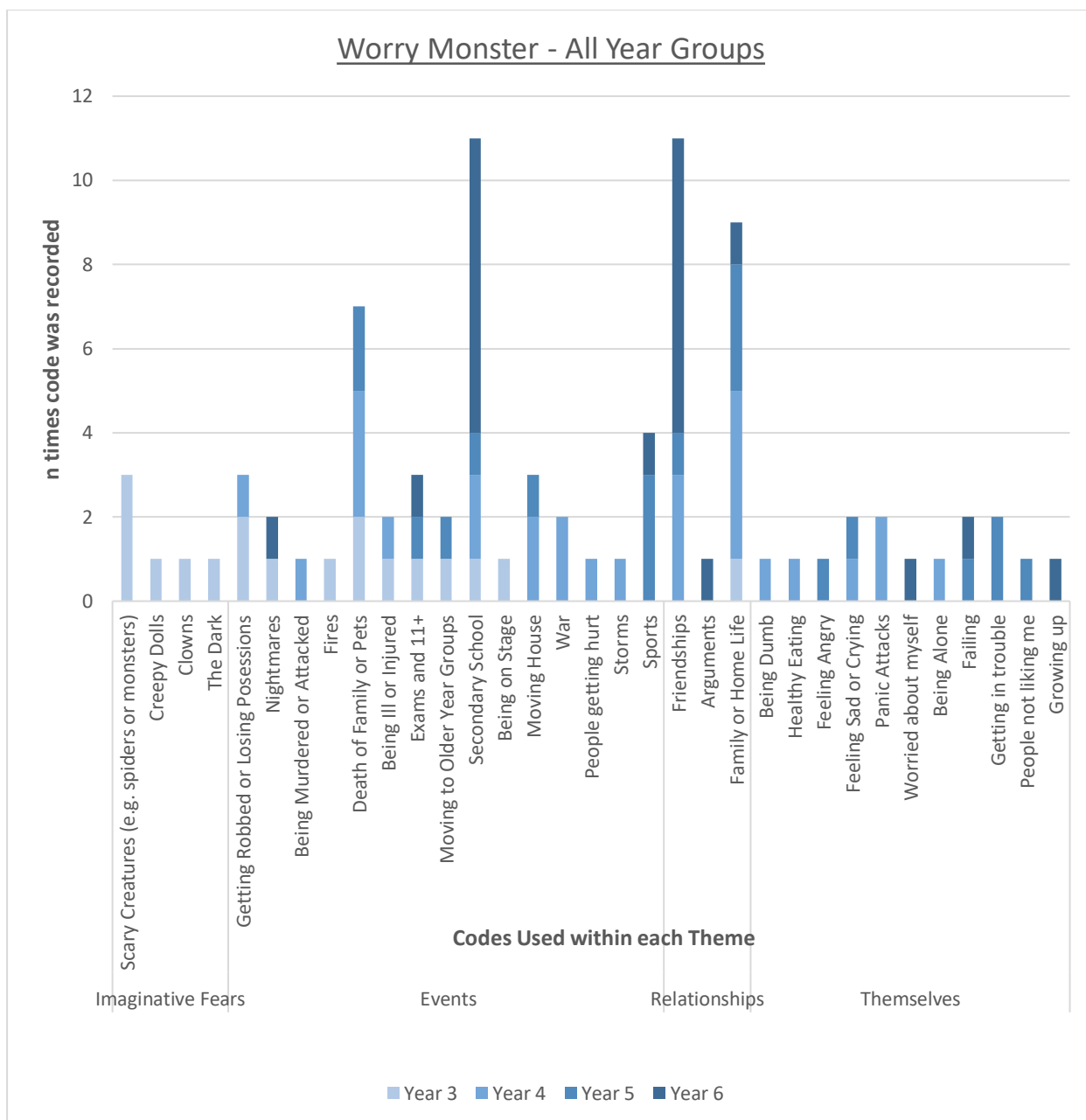


Figure 12: Chart of thematic analysis of worries collected from worry monster activity

Year Group	Number of Worries
Year 3	18
Year 4	27
Year 5	19
Year 6	22

Table 9: Number of worries per year group recorded at the worry monster activity on the day

By isolating each year group it becomes clear that the topics varied significantly as the children develop and grow older.

Year 3 focussed on imaginative fears or worries about events. No other year group had any imaginative fears.

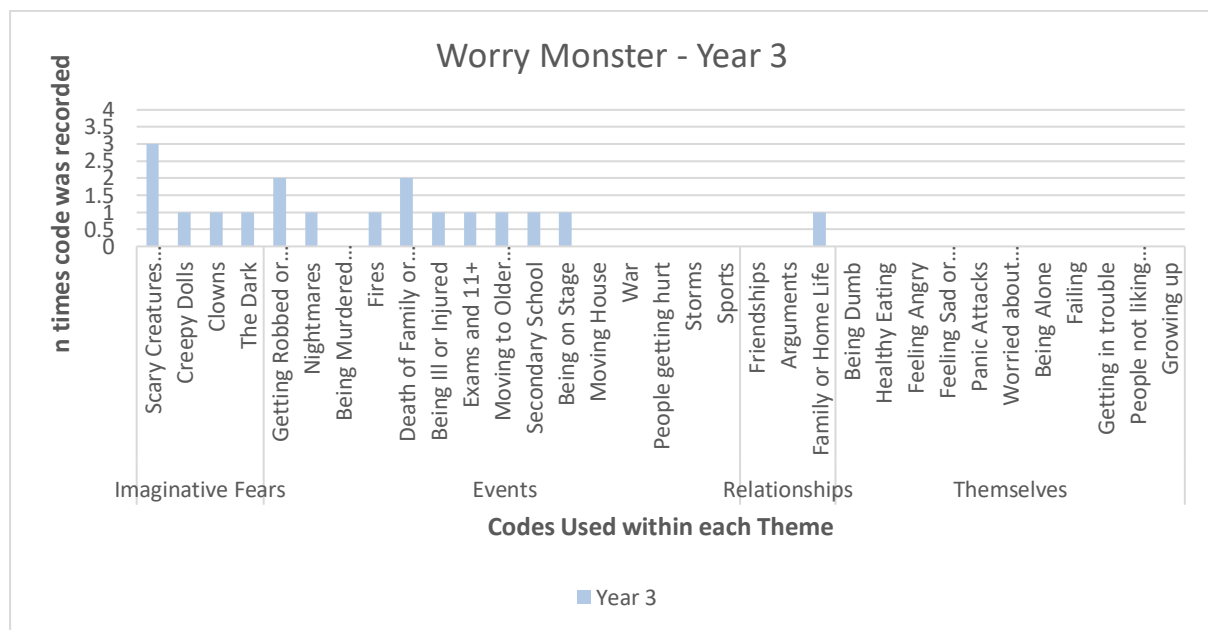


Figure 13: Chart of thematic analysis of worries collected from Year 3

Years 4 and 5 saw an increase in relational worries or worries about oneself.

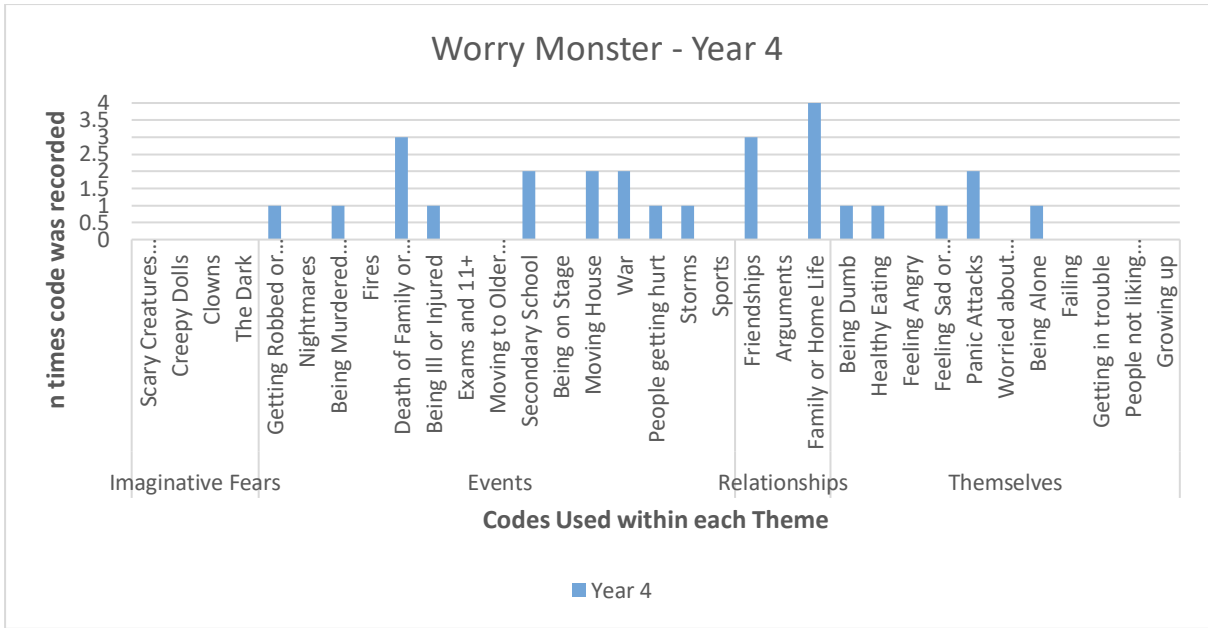


Figure 14: Chart of thematic analysis of worries collected from Year 4

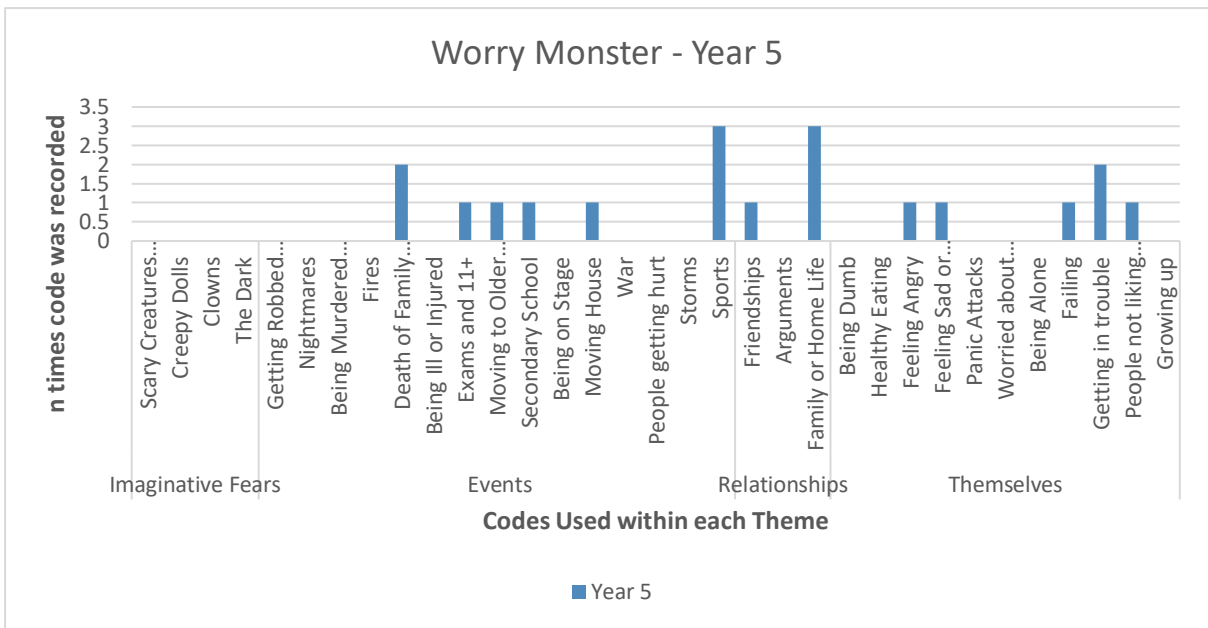


Figure 15: Chart of thematic analysis of worries collected from Year 5

Worries in year 6 were highly concentrated on secondary school and friendships.

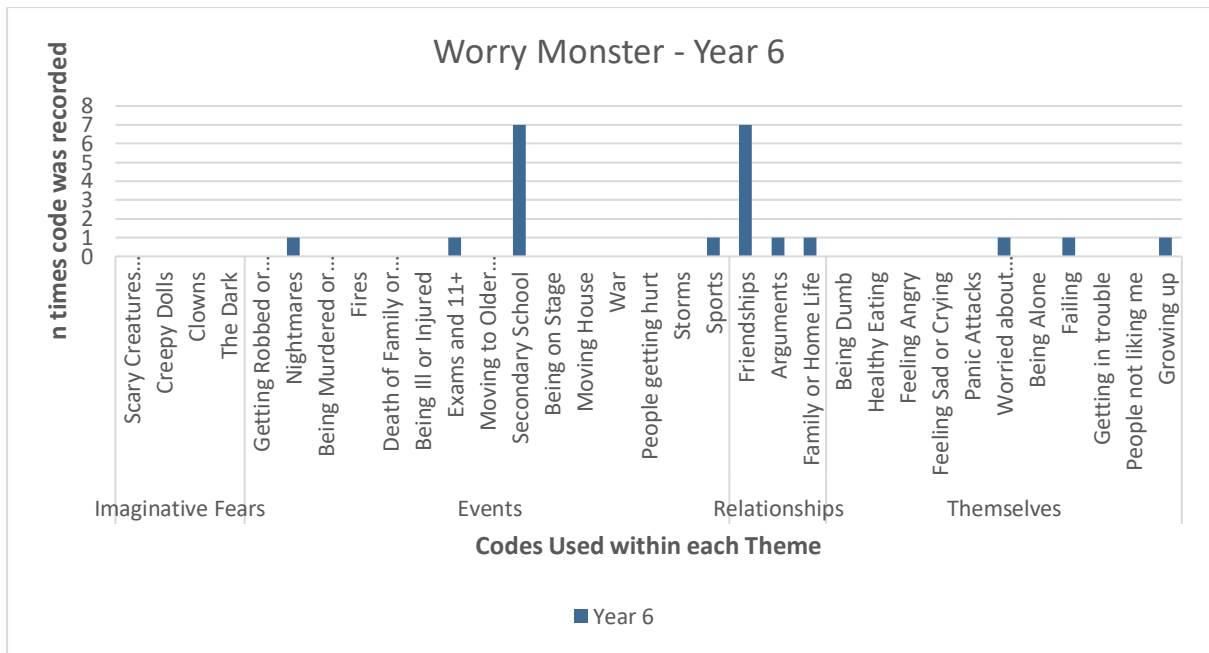


Figure 16: Chart of thematic analysis of worries collected from Year 6

This demonstrates a shift from imaginative fears to fears based on events and relationships as the CYPs get older. These worries will naturally hinder CYP's ability to experience peace.

Notably, of the year 6 comments about friendships, three focussed on friendship issues or conflicts, while four were focussed on making friends. This demonstrates the impact of the transition to secondary school on this year 6 class.



Figure 17: Photograph of worries about friendships written by year 6 students

Through the umbrella activity, the children wrote their coping strategies onto the clear umbrella with an erasable whiteboard marker. The comments were coded and put into themes however the indecipherable or irrelevant comments were not included in this data.

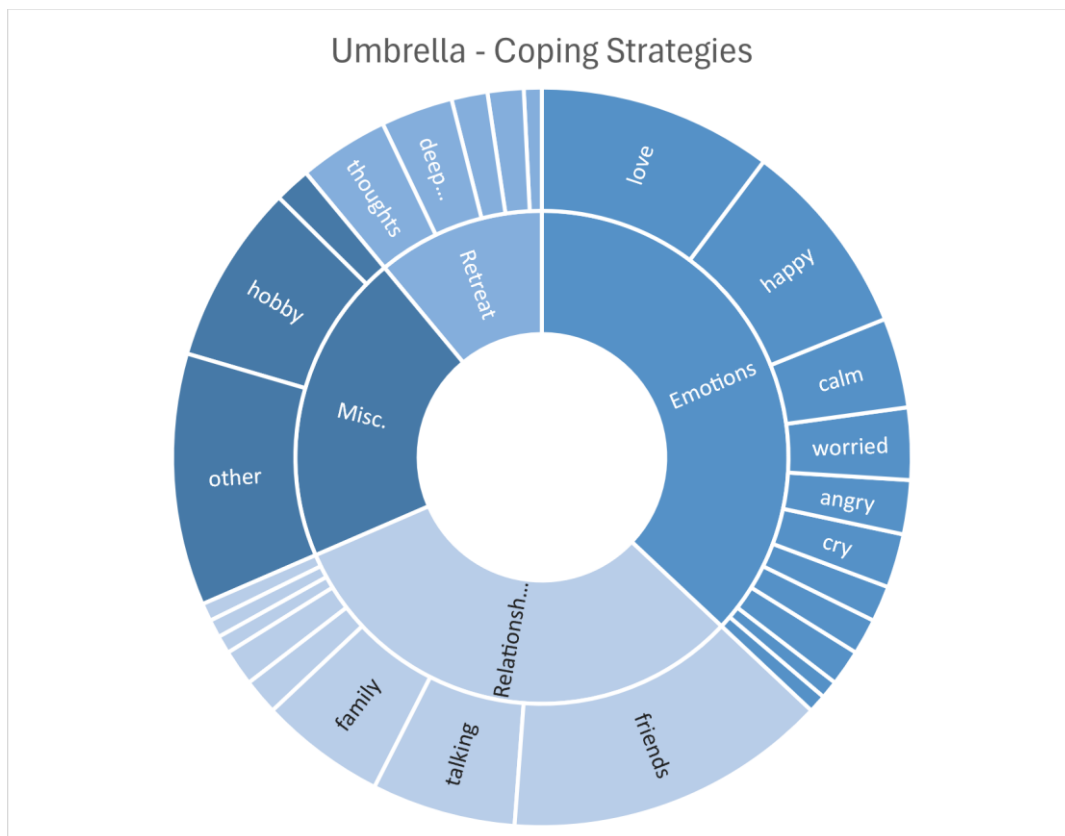


Figure 18: Donut chart of thematic analysis of coping strategies collected from the umbrella activity

On this chart, the themes are in the inner circle, while the the respective codes are on the outside with their sizes being proportional to the number of times that items were recorded in each code during the umbrella activity.

Interestingly, the most discussed theme was emotion or feelings. Within that theme the most common ideas were love and happiness. This appears to contradict previous data which has thus far significantly focussed on a sense of calm. It would be interesting to do further research about why the children talked more about happiness than about calm when thinking about going through

difficult situations. Some possibilities could include wanting to reach a happy conclusion to their struggles, facing trials with a positive attitude, viewing happiness as the ultimate end goal, or putting on a brave face.

An emotion which was commonly discussed was love. This could just have easily been put under the theme of relationship, but since it was often discussed as a feeling it was placed under emotion. However, it is heavily linked with relationship. Love may be seen as a value which many of the children may hold.

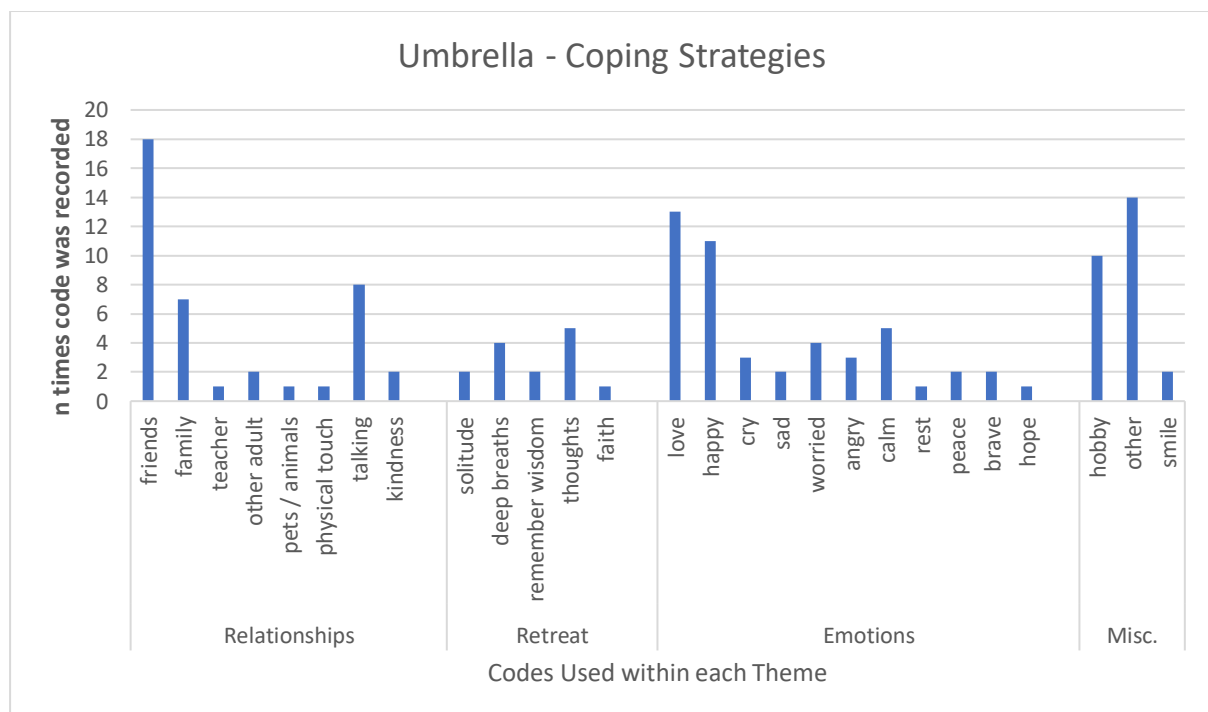


Figure 19: Bar graph of thematic analysis of coping strategies collected from the umbrella activity

Friendships and talking were the most common codes under relationships. It would be interesting to further analyse differences between gender and age group which is not possible as all the children wrote anonymously on the same umbrella. It is fascinating that friendships are the most common coping strategy but also cause of worry as previously discussed. Perhaps this has to do with the developmental stage that these children are at where they are learning to trust their friends more and also learning how to hold that trust well during a time of maturing and increasing hormones.

Summary

In summary, from this research, it is clear that there are several themes which matter to the children about prayer spaces and peace. The themes of specific activities, friendship and safe adults and feelings a sense of calm were particularly important to the children.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

Finding 1 – Specific Activities

Using the Senses

The most impactful activities from the prayer space appeared to be the motion bubbler (watching in solitude and silence), the worry monster (writing and then doing an action) and the playdough (touching and smelling the playdough while talking with peers) (see table 3 and table 4). This suggests that either a mix of solitude and discussion were useful to the children, or that being given flexibility was important to the children. This prayer space was not done in a carousel style, but the children were given the freedom to experience the stations that they wanted for as much time as was useful for them. This makes it difficult to differentiate whether it was a mix of activities or the freedom to choose which activities they engaged in that benefitted the children the most. For those doing further research into prayer spaces, a study of the differences between an open room and carousel style and how each style benefits or hinders CYPs would be noteworthy.

But the activities that this study found to be most popular used sight, writing, an action, touch, smell, solitude and discussion. Other activities mentioned by the children (e.g. fidget toys, music, crafts, prayer and positive words) involved the use of sight, sound and touch and could be done in a flexible way (see table 4). These different activities and ways of using the senses to facilitate peace are aligned with ideas about different types of intelligence and spiritual styles.

Intelligence may be “linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal and intrapersonal, and understanding this may help develop appropriate activities that meet the needs of different children and young people” (Nash et al., 2015, p.23). This can be further categorised into visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles (ibid.).

Similarly, spiritual styles may also be considered which may include word, emotion, symbol and action (Csinos, 2011, n.p.; Nash et al., 2015, p.38). No person will fit solely into one style and although there are clear distinctions, there may be overlap between the styles (Csinos, 2011, n.p.) Spiritual styles are an imperfect but insightful model which help to understand someone’s spiritual life (ibid.).

So, using the senses through various learning and spiritual styles will help children to engage with the activities and explore their spiritual wellbeing. Nash, Darby and Nash use activities during a process they call 'interpretive spiritual encounters' (ISEs) which will enable chaplains to build trusting relationships while offering spiritual care (Nash et al., 2015, p.35). During ISEs, young people do an activity alongside a chaplain that helps them to explore and express their spiritual needs and issues that are meaningful to them while building a relationship with the chaplain (ibid., p.31, 39).

Nash, Darby and Nash discuss various activities including the use of music which may ease anxiety by offering familiarity or temporary distraction (Nash et al., 2015, p.137-141); prayerful activities such as making artwork or using prayer ropes which may help to meet spiritual, religious, psychological or emotional needs (ibid., p.132-133); and images which may help young people to explore spiritual ideas which may bring them hope or comfort (ibid., p.142). These activities allow children to explore the complexity of their spirituality validating their experiences and challenges (ibid., p.142). Reminders of spiritual care and visible expressions of it can also be beneficial to children and help them connect challenging moments to appropriate spiritual hope (ibid., p.26-27). This was done at the prayer space by providing each child with a finger labyrinth (appendix 6.03) which they could take home or leave at school.

While ISEs are usually done on a one-to-one basis, spiritual care is possible in groups and will help to cultivate community and facilitate conversations between the CYPs (Nash et al., 2015, p.99). It may be argued that the prayer and reflection space was a form of interpretive spiritual encounter for the children. It did not offer a one-to-one discussion with a chaplain for the duration of the session, but it offered activities that helped them to explore meaning and spirituality while potentially engaging in conversation with a volunteer or with each other.

Spiritual Development and Resilience

While these activities engaged the senses and used different learning and spiritual styles, it is important to ask why spiritual encounters matter. One reason that enriching spirituality is important is due to the correlation between spirituality and positive wellbeing (Cloninger, 2006, p.71). It might also be helpful to consider wellbeing not just as a personal state but a process (Norwich et al., 2022, p.811). In essence, spirituality is not just measured by how someone is in this moment but how well

they can cope with life's daily challenges. Hence, wellbeing can be improved through character development (Cloninger, 2006, p.72), which includes spiritual development.

Three Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) categories of self-directedness (inward), cooperativeness (outward) and transcendence (upward) were important in preventing depression (Cloninger, 2006, p.73). Those who score highly in these three areas are more likely to experience positive emotions frequently (e.g. joyful, satisfied, happy) and negative emotions infrequently (e.g. angry, sad, anxious) (ibid., p.72). These character traits can be exercised and developed through encouraging kindness, forgiveness, hope, and awareness of a "meaning greater than oneself" (ibid., p.73). All of these are parts of the self which require non-therapeutic support. Thus, the chaplain can engage and provide support in these areas.

The chaplain then, can use activities and interpretive spiritual encounters to help an individual assess and improve their inward, outward and upward spiritual wellbeing and aid them in focussing on growth and emotional regulation. Creating a safe space for emotional expression, where children feel a sense of belonging and safety will help to develop a safe and productive learning environment (Bezzina, 2021, p.55). CYPs may be unaware of their own ongoing inward, outward and upward journeys. The longevity of peace was not mentioned by the participants. However, profound moments were articulated by the participants.

As an example, Alice described drawing as being satisfying and said, "it would calm me down. And then when I just draw it feels like all your worries, going from your hand into the pen and you're drawing them out on a piece of paper."

This profound and beautiful image of worries leaving the body through creativity shows that the action in the present moment mattered to the CYPs. Finding a sense of calm helped them to find peace.

In summary, activities which engaged the senses, allowed for flexibility and utilised different learning and spiritual styles helped the CYPs experience peace. Specific activities may aid chaplains in assessing children's inward, outward and upward wellbeing and TCI traits but more importantly they

offer individuals opportunities to have a spiritual experience. These experiences are of concern to chaplain.

Finding 2 – Relationships are important to helping children experience peace.

When discussing peace, the children had a positive view of safe adults. However, when discussing friendships with their peers, negative encounters had a greater impact on their sense of peace than positive encounters. The chaplain can be that safe adult who is a non-anxious presence journeying with those who are struggling, but they may also have a role in resolving interpersonal conflicts and bringing peace to those situations.

Safe, non-anxious presence

As was discussed in the literature review chapter, Jesus carried himself as a non-anxious presence, remaining calm and unhurried (Huh, 2012, p.580). While on his way to heal Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:21-45), Jesus took time to stop and talk to the chronically ill woman, addressed her with compassion and encouraged her (Huh, 2012, p.576, 580). Furthermore, Jesus remained composed as he addressed a mourning group at Jairus' house and raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (ibid., p.581). In the midst of heightened emotions, Jesus remained calm, unhurried and composed (ibid., p.580-581).

Because of this, Huh draws a comparison between Jesus and a mother. He states that good parenthood is not about protecting the child from anxiety but being a safe, non-anxious presence through it (Huh, 2012, p.583). A good mother acknowledges her inability to meet every need of her child and embraces and accepts her limitations in a non-anxious and composed manner (ibid., p.583). Responding to anxiety well is more effective than trying to prevent a child's anxiety entirely (ibid, p.583).

Huh's analogy of Jesus as a mother figure is helpful when considering allowing children to experience anxiety and helping them to grow into strong and autonomous individuals. However, that is where its usefulness ends. Huh's arguments about Jesus as a mother figure may give the impression that Jesus will separate himself from individuals and the Church. Additionally, Huh's points should not be taken into an argument about the sexuality or gender identity of Christ. This would be unhelpful and would stretch the analogy of Jesus as a non-anxious mother too far.

Nevertheless, the idea of being a non-anxious presence is helpful to create a safe space for others to experience and cope with their own anxiety. The secular idea of non-anxious presence is undoubtedly useful for Christian practice. Arguably, non-anxious presence is an example of kenosis (self-emptying). However, it could be argued that for chaplains, it is not enough to be non-anxious. To fully realise the entirety of God's potential to work through the chaplain, indwelling of the Holy Spirit is needed.

"Ward argues that a theological emphasis on kenosis (emptying) must be balanced in equal measure by the Pauline concept of plerosis (filling up). Ward exposit's Paul's use of *pleroo* as a 'theological reflection of the economics of divine power with respect to embodiment in Christ ... a reflection upon divinity as it manifests itself in the concrete historicity of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ'" (Pickell, 2019, p.71-72).

Kenosis (emptying) and plerosis (filling) are complementary processes that leave one in a posture of giving to others and receiving from God (Pickell, 2019, p.72). So the chaplain is empty of themselves, full of the Holy Spirit and ready to pastorally accompany young people through their circumstances.

To help a chaplain to continually be that calm, non-anxious, spirit-filled presence, a consideration of contemplative ministry will be useful. "Taking time in contemplative prayer prepares us for wonder and amazement" (Yaconelli, 2006, p.86). The chaplain trusts less in their own ability to share their faith and more in God's slow work and available presence (ibid., p.86).

Once the chaplain is within a spiritual place of contemplation, they can begin to find ways to offer their non-anxious, Holy Spirit-filled presence to young people. Self-management (which is required for a non-anxious presence) needs acknowledgement of one's own limits, clear beliefs, courage, and emotional and spiritual stamina (Steinke, 2006, n.p.). Responding non-anxiously requires maintaining self-awareness, being thoughtful in action, and remaining calm (ibid., n.p.). The chaplain then, needs a high TCI score as well as considering the score of the CYPs.

Resolving Conflicts and Peacebuilding

The chaplain has a 'ministry of reconciliation' which may be outworked through teaching self-management skills to others. Social environments which support positive change will enable children to develop conflict resolution skills because they are more likely to experience positive wellbeing and belonging (Bezzina, 2021, p.49). Through learning skills such as empathy, cooperation, mediation, resilience and problem-solving, children will learn to self-regulate and manage their emotions, behaviours and relationships (ibid., p.49). Helping individuals to reflect on their actions will help them to consider and learn about how they want to respond in the future (ibid., p.52-53).

How to approach this, however, requires further research and training to give principles in helping CYPs manage conflict well. It was found that disruptive classmates and friendship issues had a large negative impact on the CYP's sense of peace, so this was important to them.

Eleanor gave one example of the way in which others can impact peace: "If we're in class and it's peaceful and then some people came in like shouting, um, everybody like, it disrupts the peace but then the teacher will like tell them to go outside and walk in like quietly".

Jesus' principles for conflict management in Matthew 8:15-17 might be useful for CYPs to understand (Going to the person alone, then with someone else, then going to the church for help). However, approaching someone with a grievance is difficult and takes spiritual and emotional maturity. Therefore, more research is needed on this topic which should include resources being made to support CYPs with conflict management and peacebuilding. Chaplains may also need to help to set expectations to help avoid disruptions at school.

Finding 3 – The prayer space helped children experience calm

When considering their feelings and emotions a sense of calm was extremely important to the children, while dealing with worry and anxiety was discussed less frequently and appeared less important to them. This was surprising as there was some expectation that the CYPs would use the prayer space as a place to process their problems and worries. Instead, it added calm to their day while it did not necessarily take away their worries. Perhaps this theme of calm (which may be found in respite and retreat) suggests that prayer spaces or something similar should be a regular spiritual

practice to help students spiritually engage, just as Jesus retreated regularly (Mark 1:35, 6:31-32, 6:46; Luke 6:12). One must wonder whether this result would differ if older students were asked, particularly those in secondary school or further education contexts.

Worries

Before considering calm, however, it is necessary to consider the worries recorded by the CYPs as worries will hinder a sense of peace. The data showing the shift from imaginative fears to fears based on events and relationships is absolutely fascinating (Figures 13, 14, 15, 16). It carries implications for child development research. Further study is needed to understand this in greater depth and scope, including considering CYPs in secondary school and further education.

For the chaplain, being aware of the age and development stage of the child will help them to bring peace in a way that is appropriate. Younger students may need reassurance about their imaginative fears in an affirming but realistic way. Whereas older students may need practical support or space to express worries about events and relationships. But as was discussed in the literature review, as students develop in upward spirituality, their tolerance for uncertainty may increase.

Calm

The prayer space provided a sense of calm despite these worries. Perhaps the prayer space either provided respite from the children's circumstances or empowered them to face those worries well. It would be interesting to ask the children whether that sense of calm was about respite and rest or whether it was about finding a sense of worth and resilience.

An analysis of the story of the bleeding woman (Mark 5:24-34, Luke 8:43-48) may be useful for a theological understanding. Jesus took away the woman's bleeding and health issues. However, through this act of healing, she became ritually clean. She was able to become a contributing member to society. He then tells her to "go in peace" (Mark 5:34, Luke 8:48).

Similarly, the chaplain adds a sense of peace and belonging and brings a narrative such as 'you belong here with Jesus'. This may not involve miraculous healing but involves leading the child towards knowing their inner value and worth and making choices which align with that sense of self

(inward peace), having healthy relationships with others and being part of a community (outward peace) and connecting with God which allows for tolerance of uncertainty (upward peace).

Alice: “because the pictures, um, they made me feel like calm” ... “So then like that one, made me feel like really calm, and it felt like I belonged somewhere and like, it made me feel I'm welcomed like to anywhere that like I'm new to that I'll always feel welcome.”

However, this does not feel theologically extensive when considering the calm that the children were describing. The woman was miraculously healed, and her entire life circumstances were changed. This is not what the CYPs were describing. They described calm which is a sense of stillness rather than a change in circumstance.

One is then led to Psalm 46:10 which says, “be still, and know that I am God.” The psalm overall encourages the reader within difficult times to take comfort in God, remembering that he will be glorified (Henry, 1960, p.624). He is a present help, and so the heart may be set above fear (ibid., p.625). In God's ceasing of wars, he gives time to breathe and restore (ibid., p.625).

Psalm 46:10 “implores Israel to desist from aggression and attend to God's sovereignty” (Charry, 2015, n.p.). The psalm is about abstaining from military action and trusting that God will defeat their enemies (ibid., n.p.). In other words, the psalm requires Israel or the reader to stand down, or *retreat*. In a sense, the opportunity to retreat is what the prayer space offers. The senses are engaged, but the mind is quieted. It is a break from interpersonal conflicts, but also a chance to find rest and calm in God's presence.

In contention here are two types of peace: the first is an internal disposition to ongoing inward, outward and upward peace which is not dependent on circumstance, the second is an external, temporary, refreshing sense of calm which disposes one towards peace. And when the internal disposition of peace meets an external sense of calm, a sense of wholeness, the fullness of shalom, a perfect peace can be found.

Callum's idea that 'faith is peace itself' as well as the other CYPs' spiritual ideas about peace (figures 10 and 11) give further credence to the idea that to "be still and know that I am God" (or retreat and know), leads those exhausted from life's battles towards a sense of peace. Peace is spiritual and relational.

This is precisely where the chaplain can use the prayer space as a place of calm, a place of retreat. The chaplain's role is to journey with individuals to help them expand their senses of inward, outward and upward peace, and the prayer space is a calm retreat space in which that growth is felt, understood and practised. Interestingly, the children talked about retreat using the language of quiet, stillness, being reflective, and being alone (tables 1 and 10). But the word 'retreat' itself was not identified by the children. Perhaps this demonstrates need for improvement in spiritual literacy.

From this finding, it is recommended that chaplains continue their relational focus with CYPs but intentionally offer moments of retreat (of which prayer spaces are an established example). These retreat moments will help CYPs to experience calm. A pattern of retreat will mirror Jesus' own healthy patterns, leading to spiritual rest and preparation for what is to come. Opportunities for calm and retreat are not all-encompassing of the chaplain's role but are a vital part of it which should be a regular provision. The wider benefit (for teachers, parents and carers, as well as the long-term effects) of prayer spaces and retreat opportunities should be studied.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Outcomes

This chapter will summarise and conclude the findings in this study. In order to do this, an evaluation of the study, including analysing its limitations and weaknesses, needs to take place as well as recommendations for future research. Then, McNiff's AR model will be followed so that the success of this study may be evaluated.

Addressing the Limitations and Weaknesses of the Study

It is important to acknowledge the limitations and weaknesses of this study to be able to evaluate fairly. This study was completed by an individual without a large research team, and was limited by available time. The time restrictions included the researcher's availability, the availability of the participants and the amount of time that the school would allow for this study to be carried out. The time limit of this study meant that the participants were not asked at a second point in time about the impact of the prayer space. This means that this study necessarily focussed on a single point in time and not on the longevity of the impact of prayer spaces.

Doing a focus group rather than individual interviews was necessary (as was described in the methodology chapter) and allowed the students to build on each other's ideas. However, individual interviews would have given more space for interviewees to share honestly without being potentially influenced by their peers. It is possible that some participants did not wish to disagree with others even though they were encouraged to be honest and were told that differing opinions were welcome. In future, individual interviews would be preferable if they are following safeguarding procedures and guidelines and are appropriate and possible within the setting.

Because this was a small study, there was a small sample size used for the focus group. This limits the representativeness of the CYPs involved. Furthermore, the way that participants were chosen is also slightly unclear as this was a convenience sample chosen by the headteacher. Although this meant that the students were incredibly conscientious, positive and allowed one another to share, their views may have differed from their peers in key stage 3 who all participated in the prayer space. Also using only students from years 5 and 6 (not 3 and 4), may have impacted their ideas and perceptions

of the prayer space. It would have been interesting to compare the views of younger students to those older students. Future studies could combat this by taking a larger, representative sample.

As has been previously discussed, some data recorded by a volunteer has been included in this study but was not given weight in being used to form conclusions. This is because the volunteer may have only recorded positive statements or things that they thought were useful, or may not have been able to transcribe in real-time so only recorded some of the available data. There are better ways to record the children's views at the end of the session. Voice recording if done ethically may have been possible. However, it would have been simple to ask all CYPs who experienced the prayer space to complete a short, anonymous questionnaire. This would have allowed for all views to be recorded although it may have taken more time to coordinate.

Finally, although a thematic analysis of the data appeared to be the best analysis method for an inductive approach and to understand what was important to the participants, it produced a list of themes and the frequency with which they were mentioned, rather than producing clear conclusions. This meant that the data needed interpretation. It is recognised that the interpretation may have been flawed as it is filtered through one individual's experience of using prayer and reflection space. This was mitigated to some extent by using secondary sources to compare with the results of the study, but some bias may be present. This is bias towards a relational and incarnational model of chaplaincy (which this researcher holds), and towards wanting to find a method of supporting CYPs to experience peace.

There may also be issues with the questions asked during the semi-structured interview. The questions were open which allowed indirect answers which made answering the research question more difficult. Perhaps a more direct question at the end of the interview would have been helpful. For example, 'how do you think that chaplains could use prayer and reflective spaces to help young people experience peace?'

Recommendations for future Research:

This study has raised some exciting points for further research. The link between a sense of calm and a holistic disposition towards peace would be intriguing to explore further. One might also wonder how chaplains can measure peace. In particular, the extent to which moments of calm may influence ongoing inward, outward and upward peace would be worth considering. Furthermore, a more in-

depth study into the role that engaging the senses and mindfulness activities can have on CYPs sense of wellbeing and peace would be pertinent.

During the umbrella activity, friends, love, happiness, hobbies, talking and family were all mentioned more frequently as coping mechanisms than calm was. This is an interesting finding which is worth further study. Is finding calm an adequate coping mechanism? What prevents CYPs from using calm as a coping strategy?

Another activity that raised some interesting results was the worry monster. The differences between the worries for each year group was fascinating and would be worth a deeper consideration as it may have implications for child development and child psychology. Furthermore, it would be useful to understand the effect spiritual practice might have on worry, particularly as CYPs develop.

When thinking about prayer spaces generally, it would be helpful to consider whether different types of prayer space affect CYPs ability to experience peace and calm. For example, is an open room of activities more effective than a carousel-style prayer space? Additionally, the long-term impact of prayer and reflection spaces would be relevant to consider further.

Evaluation using Action Research Model

It will now be useful to return to the AR model to apply these findings. The AR model being used is, “observe – reflect – act – evaluate – modify – move in new directions” (McNiff, 2017, p.12).

Observe:

The current use of prayer spaces has been observed and reflected upon at the beginning of this project and in the literature review. In this portion it was concluded that prayer spaces are often used for spiritual development, but not specifically used to help CYPs find peace.

Reflect:

The literature review revealed that students talked about how prayer spaces have helped them to be mindful. They are fun and relaxing and stress-reduction is an outcome of prayer spaces.

Furthermore, in the literature review, peace was discussed as three-dimensional (inward, upward and outward), and religion can have a positive or negative effect on anxiety. This led to a consideration of the chaplain's role within a dual-factor model of mental health and wellbeing and it was stated that chaplains should be concerned with developing emotional competence in CYPs.

Act:

Next, after a methodology was outlined, a study was undertaken to get the perspectives of CYPs on peace and how prayer spaces might be used to cultivate it. From this, it was found that children found activities that engaged the senses and different learning styles but gave them the flexibility to use the activities how they wanted, helped them feel most peaceful. The second finding was that relationships affect the children's sense of peace, particularly positive relationships with safe adults and negative relationships with their peers. The chaplain's role is therefore to be a safe adult and support students with conflict resolution. Finally, the most clear finding was that students experienced a sense of calm. This sense of rest and retreat is similar to Stern and Shillitoe's finding that prayer spaces help with stress-reduction.

Overall, the chaplain's role is to journey alongside CYPs, facilitating moments of retreat which will include prayer spaces. Prayer spaces are a highly effective tool for experiencing calm. Although prayer spaces are effective for this purposes, these moments of retreat and of calm, however, are not necessarily be limited to the use of prayer spaces.

Moreover, calm moments do not equate to peace. They likely help to curate a peaceful disposition, but this requires further study. Prayer spaces have not been shown to strengthen inward, outward and upward relationships on their own (although this has not been disproved). Helping others further deepen and strengthen their three-dimensional peace (which may well occur while strengthening their three-dimensional spirituality in general), is certainly worth further study and resource allocation. Prayer spaces are useful but are not likely to be extensive in this area.

Evaluate:

This study has some merits and has drawn some useful conclusions but is certainly not extensive on this topic. Deeper and broader research is warranted within the topic of peace and prayer spaces within the field of missiology and theology, but perhaps also within psychology. As a study it has succeeded in producing results that warrant further investigation.

However, as an ARP, its success is limited. This study has recommended that chaplains use various learning styles and engage the senses during prayer spaces; practise a relational model of chaplaincy, be a safe adult and support with interpersonal conflicts; be aware of changing worries as CYPs grow older; and facilitate regular moments of calm (which can happen through prayer spaces). These are practices that are already commonplace in chaplaincy.

However, although the actions taken in chaplaincy may not change, the way that prayer spaces are approached is impacted by this study. The outcomes of this study require the chaplain to intentionally consider peace which is pertinent to CYPs' spiritual development and wellbeing.

Modify:

As an ARP, this outcome may be viewed as lacking in practical impact but it reframes how chaplaincy is approached which may produce significant results. The chaplain is implored to be intentional about facilitating opportunities to deepen a sense of peace. This will include running prayer spaces and retreat events for CYPs; being intentional about using various learning and spiritual styles; help CYPs to value spiritual experiences; assessing inward, outward, and upward peace as well as TCI traits; receiving training in supporting CYPs through interpersonal conflicts; being a non-anxious presence; and adapting the approach to worries depending on the child's development and worries.

Concluding statement

Chaplains can use prayer spaces to help CYPs experience external calm and to help evaluate their internal peace. Chaplains should continue to use prayer spaces that utilise different learning and spiritual styles and engage the senses. Prayer spaces are effective for this, but resources other than prayer spaces may also be used. Chaplains must use prayer spaces within the context of ongoing

relationships with CYPs, being a non-anxious adult, and supporting CYPs through interpersonal conflicts. This study suggests that moments of calm are important to CYPs and opportunities to retreat should be provided by chaplains. However, further research and inquiry are needed to better understand the relationship between moments of calm and ongoing peace.

Total Word Count: 16,387 words

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Certificate of Ethics Approval

**C E R T I F I C A T E O F
R E S E A R C H E T H I C S A P P R O V A L**

How might chaplains in the South East of England use prayer and reflective spaces to help young people experience peace?

Module: CYM701

This is to certify that this project has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Birmingham Newman University

Student Number: 2104392



**Birmingham
Newman
University**

L. A. Woodfield

Chair of the Research Ethics Committee

Date: November 28, 2023

Appendix 2: Transcript of Focus Group



Transcript%20Prayer%20Space%20Focus

Appendix 3: Spreadsheet Showing Coding of Data Collected on the Day of the Prayer Space



Data%20From%20Day%20of%20Prayer

Appendix 4: Spreadsheet Showing Coding of Focus Group Data



Focus%20Group%20Thematic

Appendix 5: Focus Group Questions



Interview%20Questions%20for%20Focus

Appendix 6: Prayer Space Activities

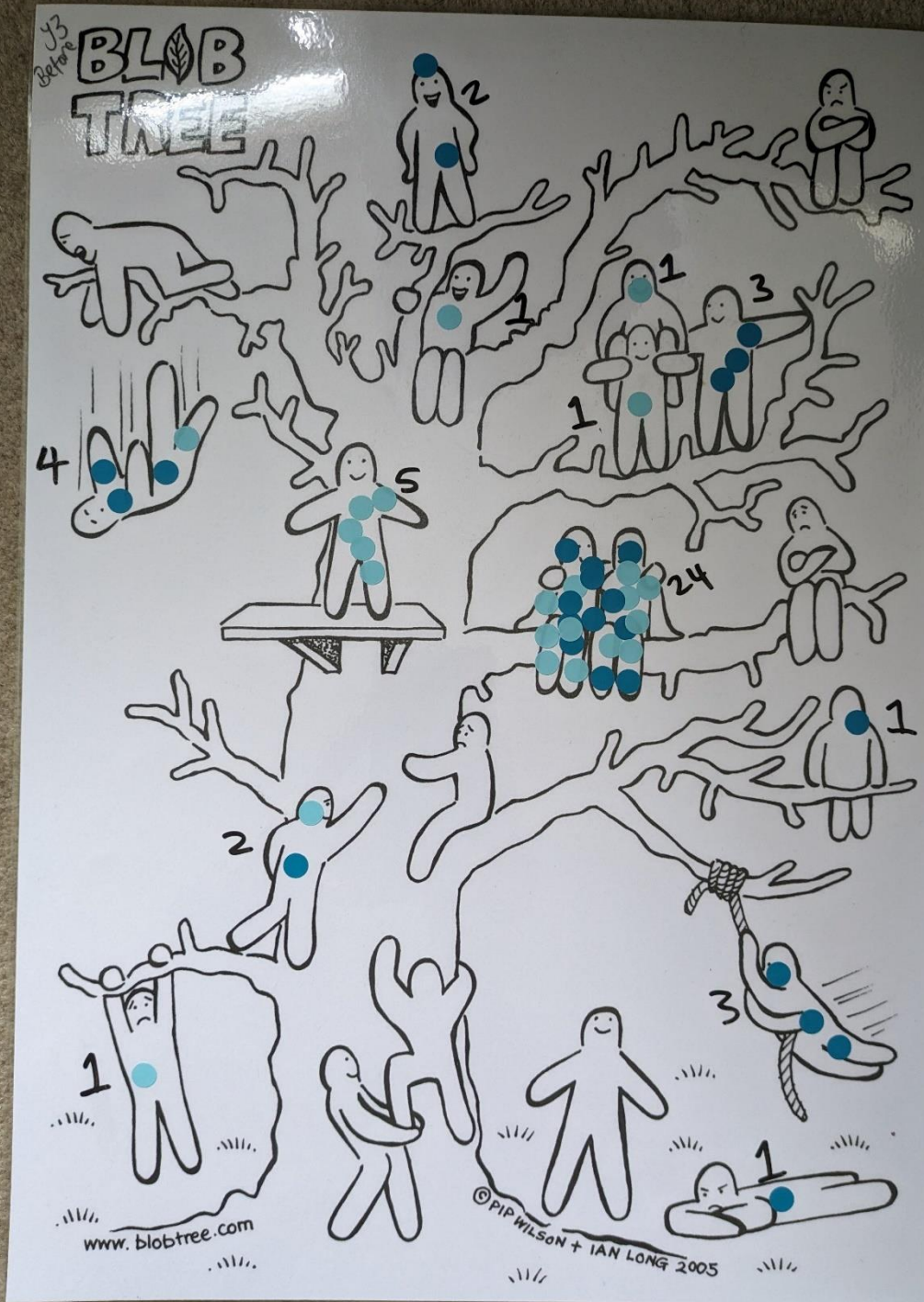
6.01: Blob tree

Instructions:

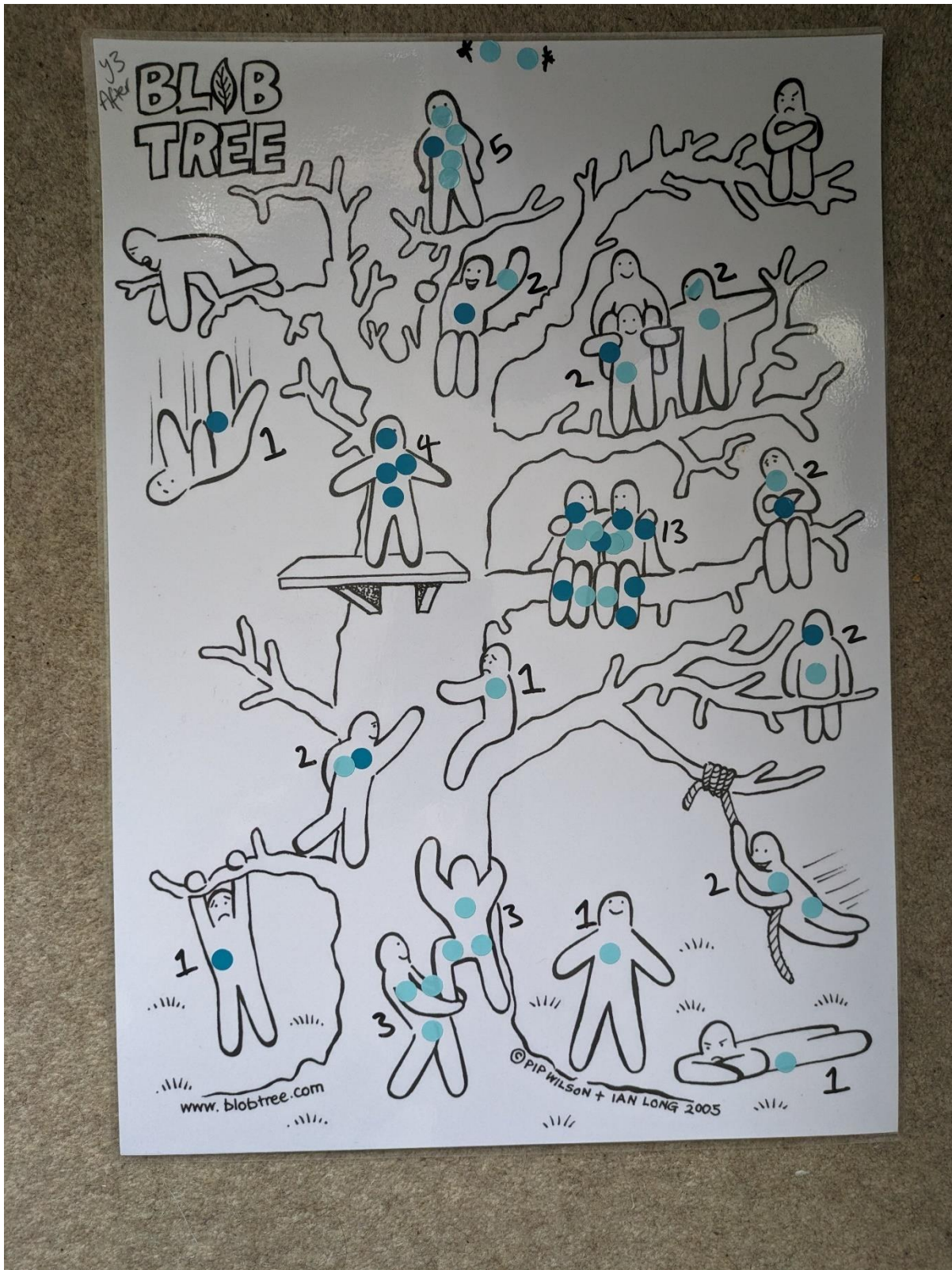
Place a sticker about how you're feeling about the prayer space at the start.

Place a sticker about how you're feeling about the prayer space at the end.

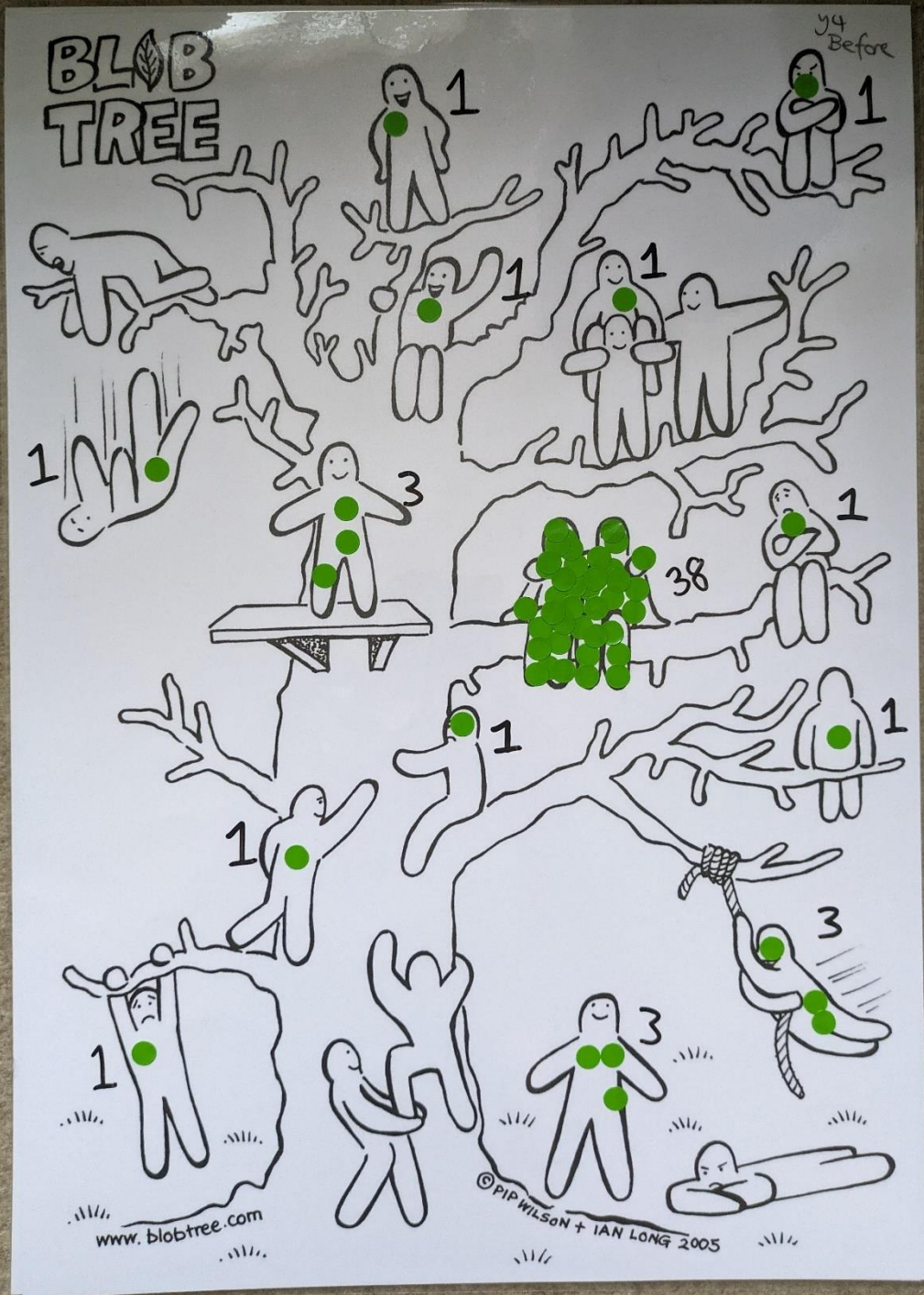
6.01.A: Year 3 at the start:



6.01.B: Year 3 at the end:



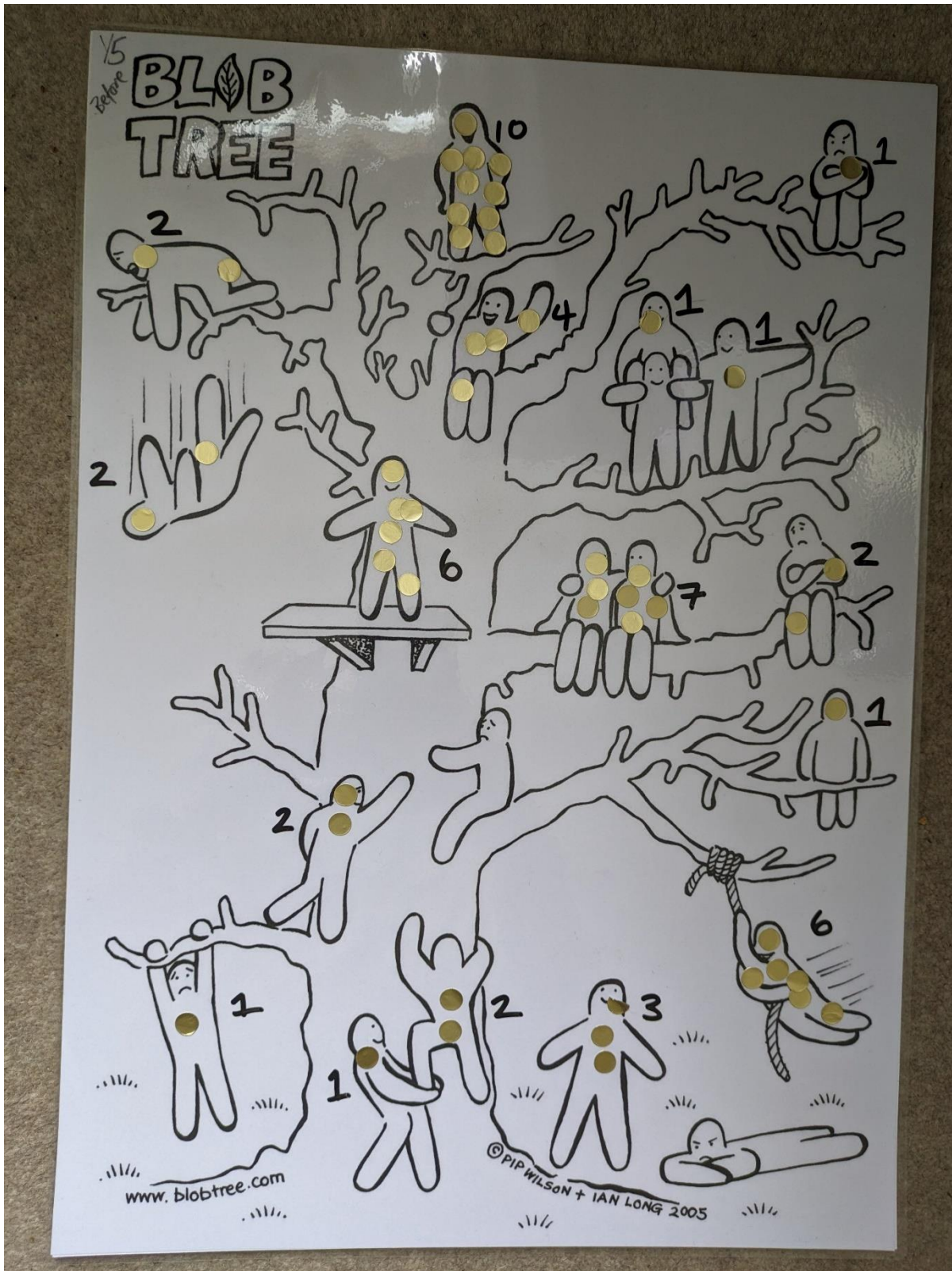
6.01.C: Year 4 at the start:



6.01.D: Year 4 at the end:



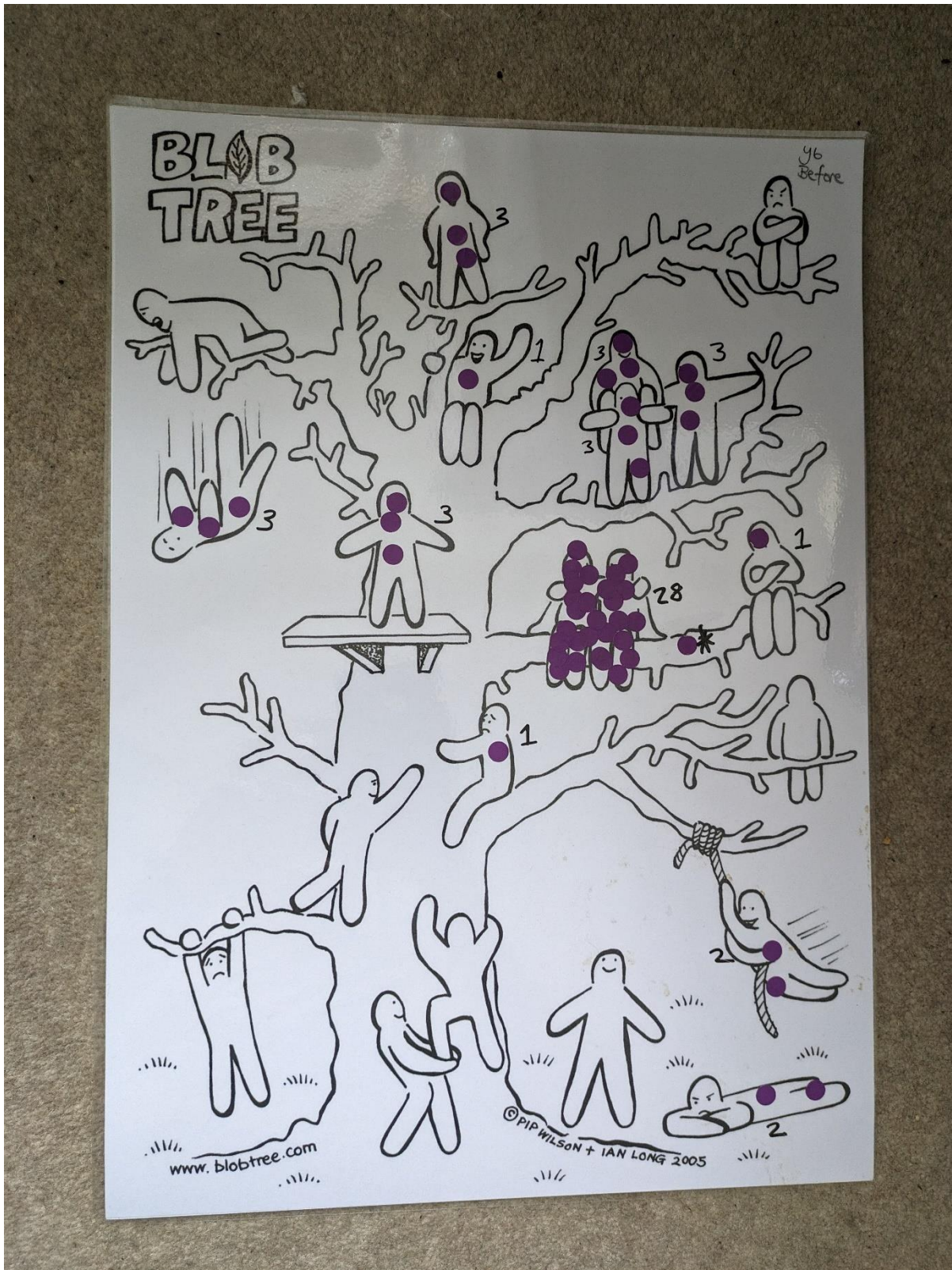
6.01.E: Year 5 at the start:



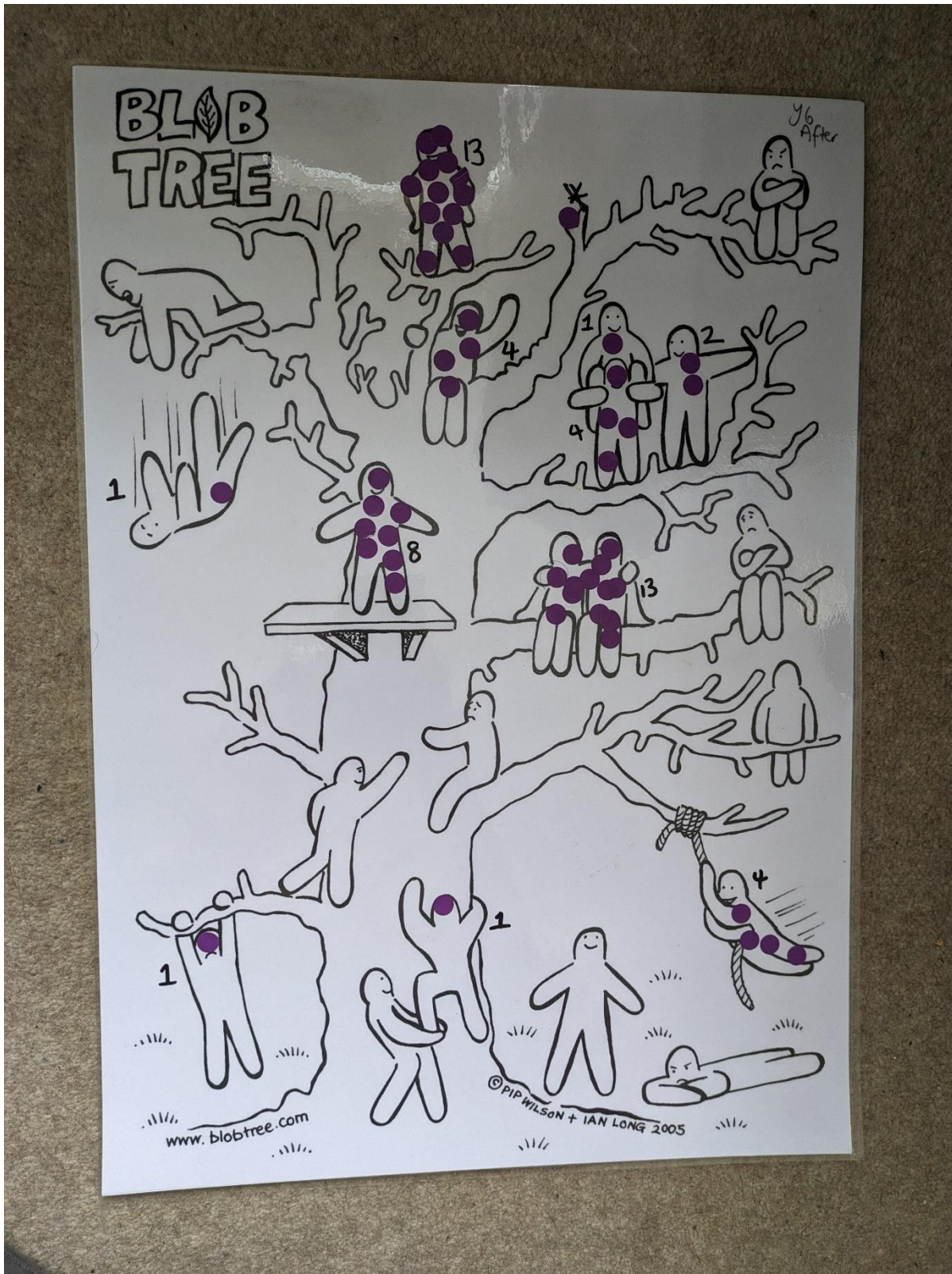
6.01.F: Year 5 at the end:



6.01.G: Year 6 at the start:



6.01.H: Year 6 at the end:



6.03: Finger Labyrinth – Take away

Instructions:

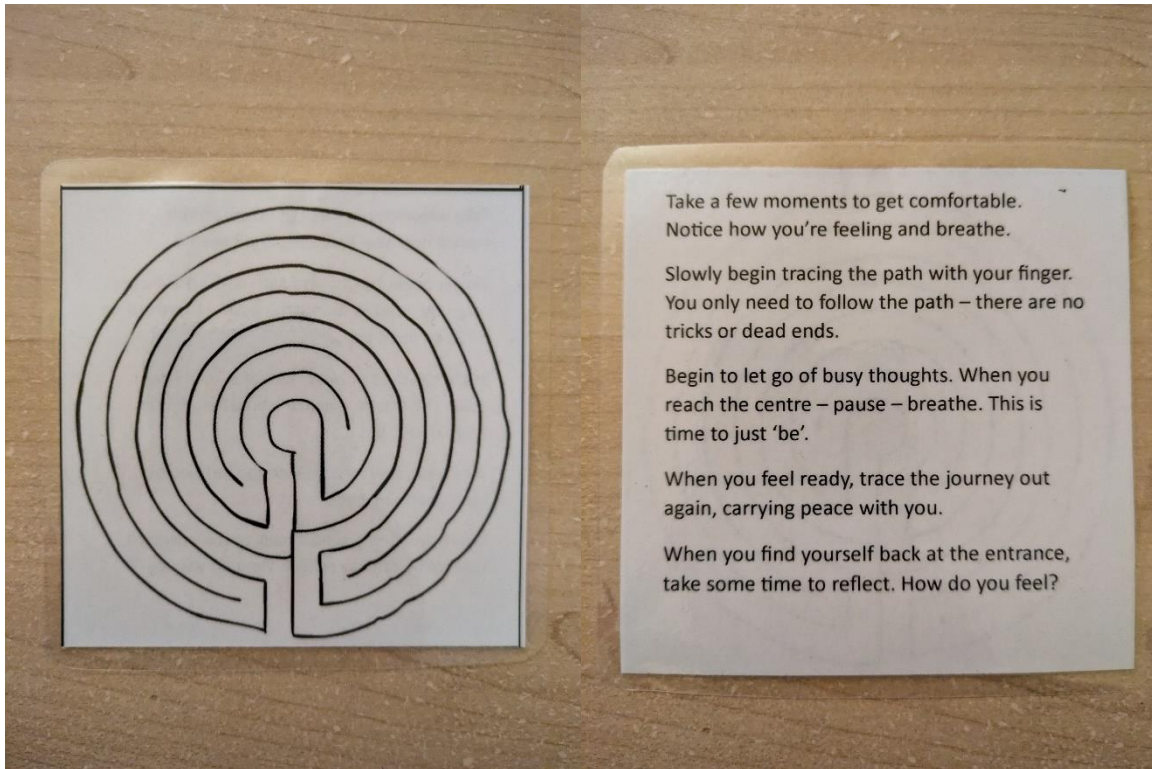
Take a few moments to get comfortable. Notice how you're feeling and breathe.

Slowly begin tracing the path with your finger. You only need to follow the path – there are no tricks or dead ends.

Begin to let go of busy thoughts. When you reach the centre – pause – breathe. This is time to just 'be'.

When you feel ready, trace the journey out again, carrying peace with you.

When you find yourself back at the entrance, take some time to reflect. Do you feel lighter, stronger and ready to engage?



6.04: Prayer beads

Instructions:

As you move each bead across from one side of the rope to the other, send up a prayer or some happy thoughts for someone who you love and appreciate.

6.05: Sorry Tree

Instructions:

Sometimes saying sorry can be really beautiful. Write a sorry note and hang it on the tree. If you need to say sorry to somebody in your class, you could do this activity together.

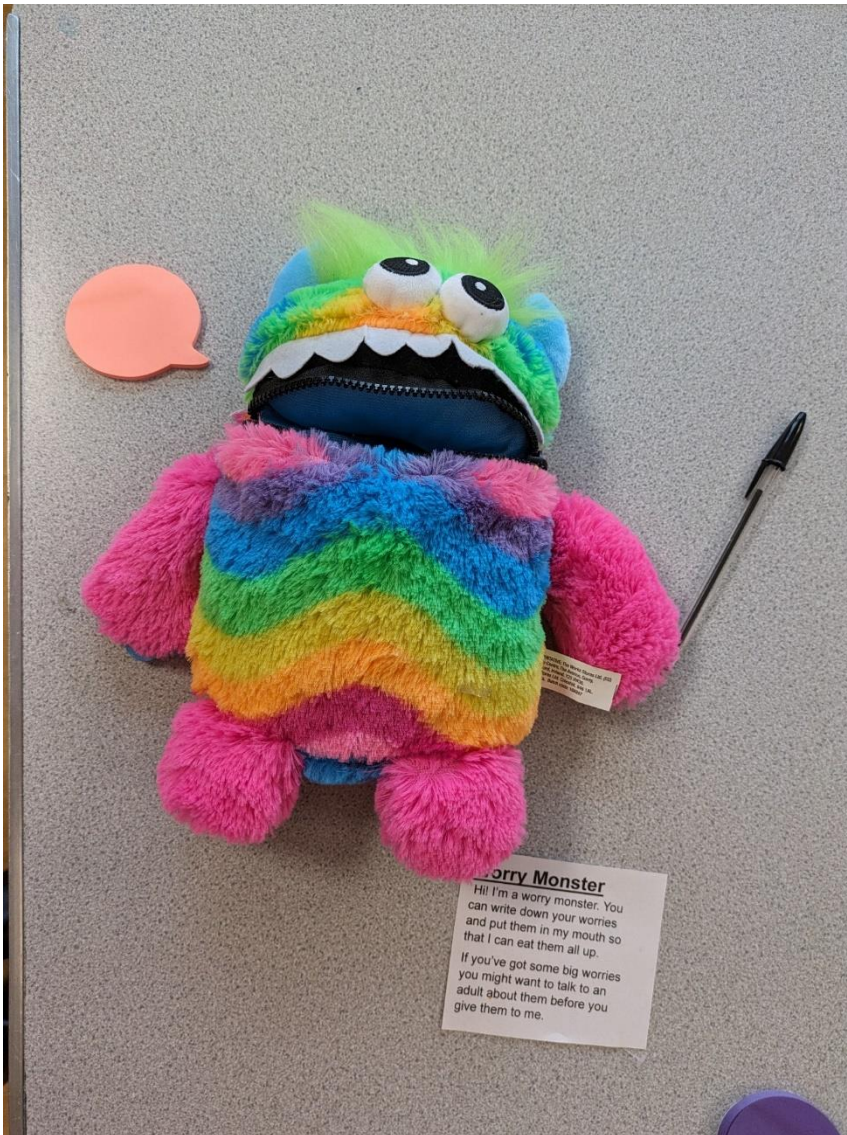


6.06: Worry Monster

Instructions:

Hi! I'm a worry monster. You can write down your worries and put them in my mouth so that I can eat them all up.

If you've got some big worries you might want to talk to an adult about them before you give them to me.



6.07: Bubble Wrap Worries

Instructions:

What worries you?

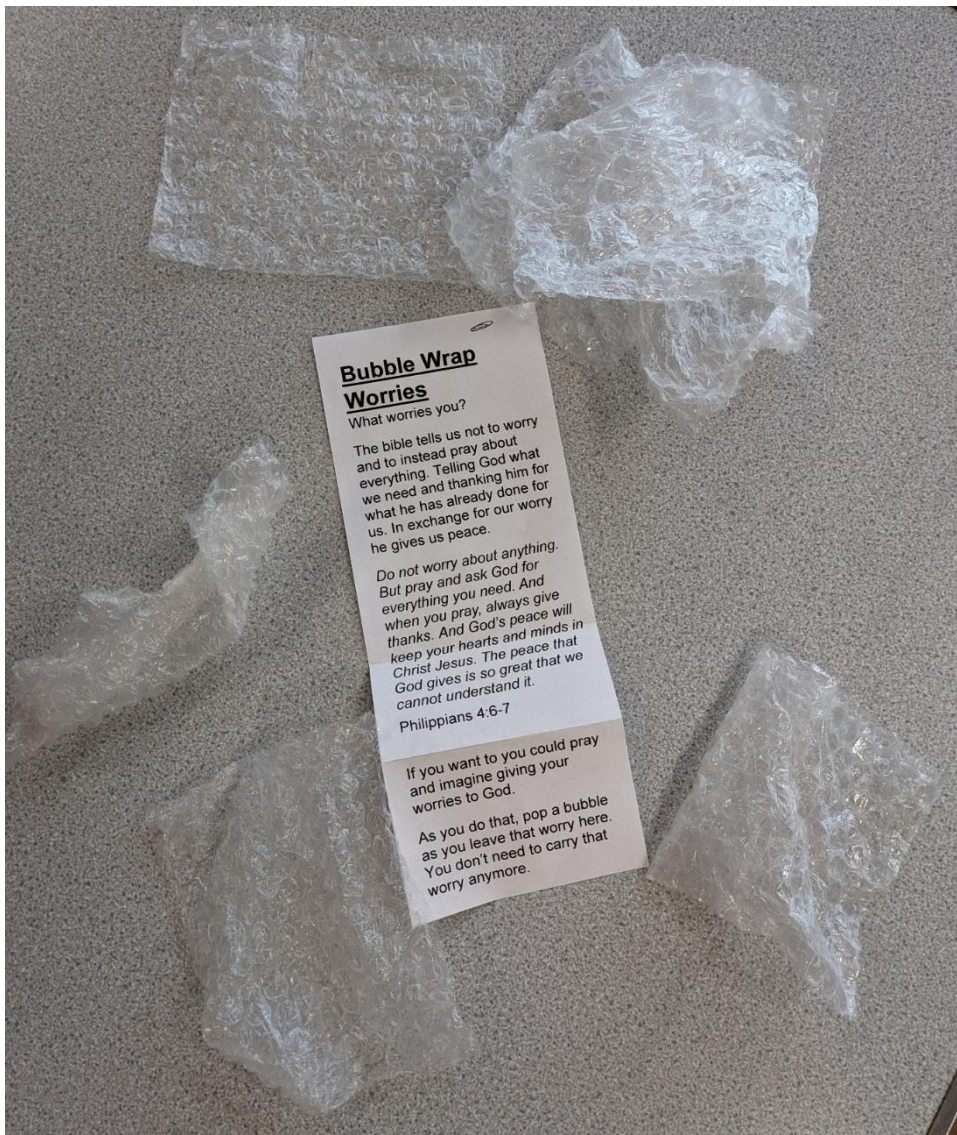
The bible tells us not to worry and to instead pray about everything. Telling God what we need and thanking him for what he has already done for us. In exchange for our worry he gives us peace.

Do not worry about anything. But pray and ask God for everything you need. And when you pray, always give thanks. ⁷ And God's peace will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. The peace that God gives is so great that we cannot understand it.

Philippians 4:6-7

If you want to you could pray and imagine giving your worries to God.

As you do that, pop a bubble as you leave that worry here. You don't need to carry that worry anymore.



6.08: Untie The Knot

Instructions:

Sometimes people say that they feel 'knotted up' inside with worries and anxieties.

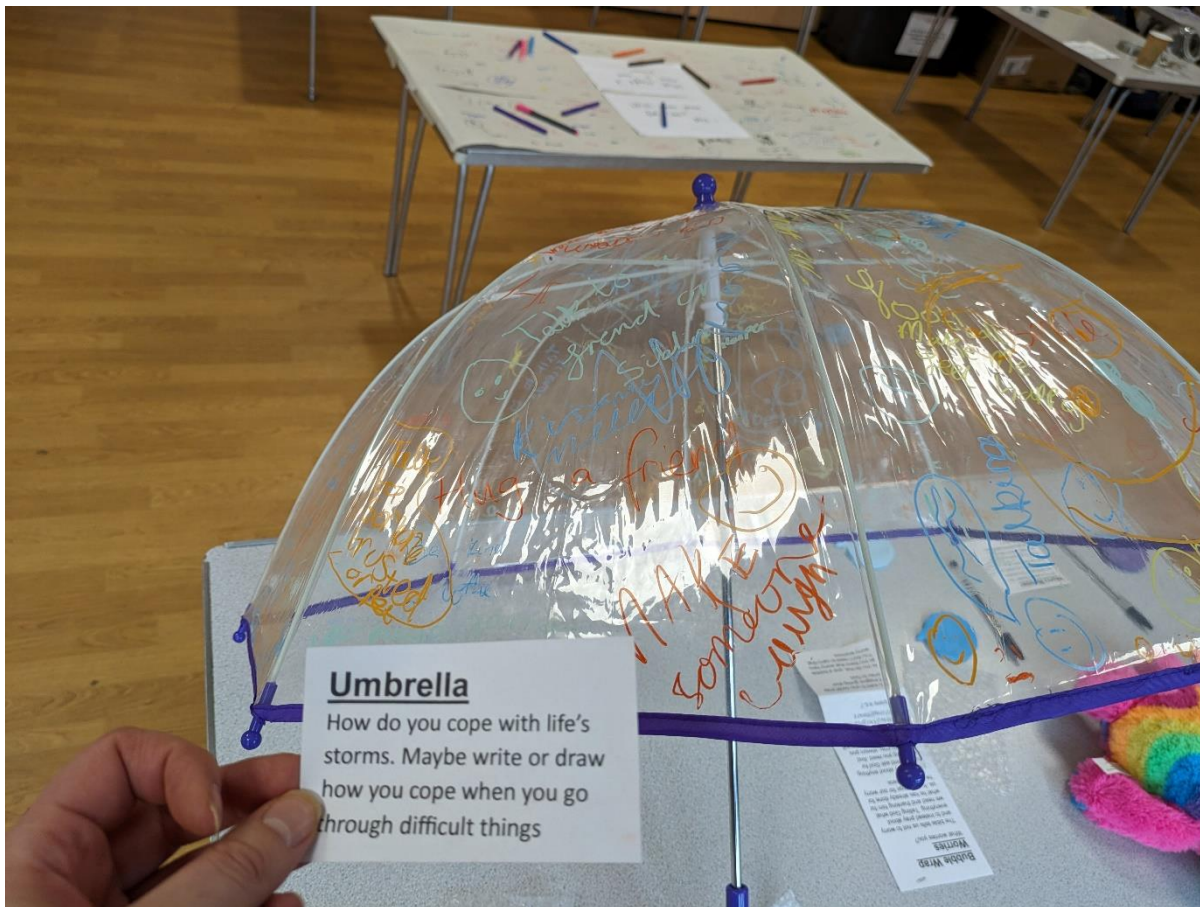
Feel free to pick up the rope and slowly untie one of the knots for each of your worries. As you untie the knot, notice how you feel inside

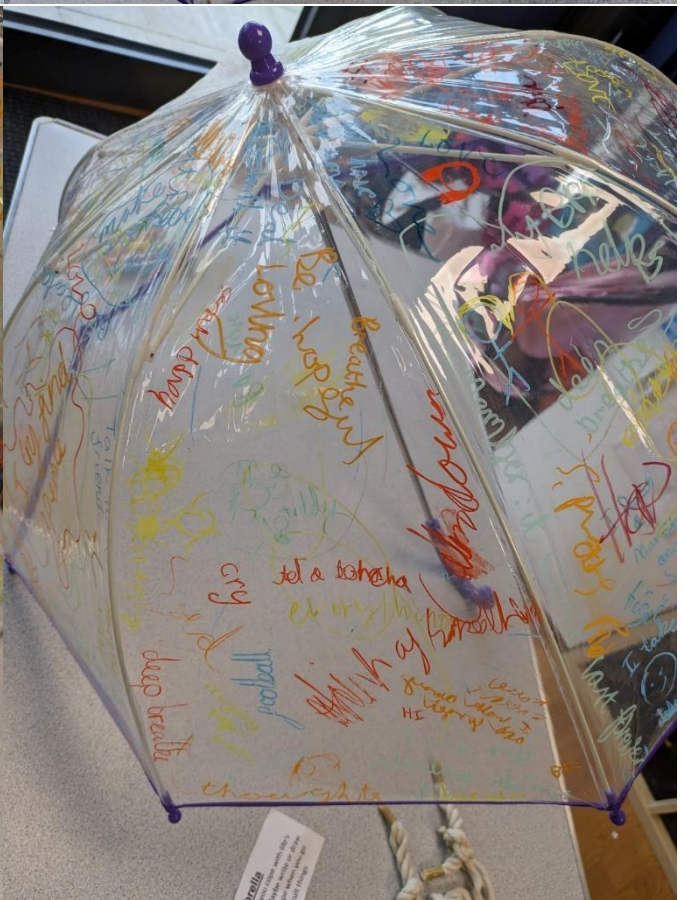


6.09: Umbrella

Instructions:

How do you cope with life's storms. Maybe write or draw how you cope when you go through difficult things





6.10: Playdough



6.11: See Yourself Through Jesus' Eyes

Instructions:

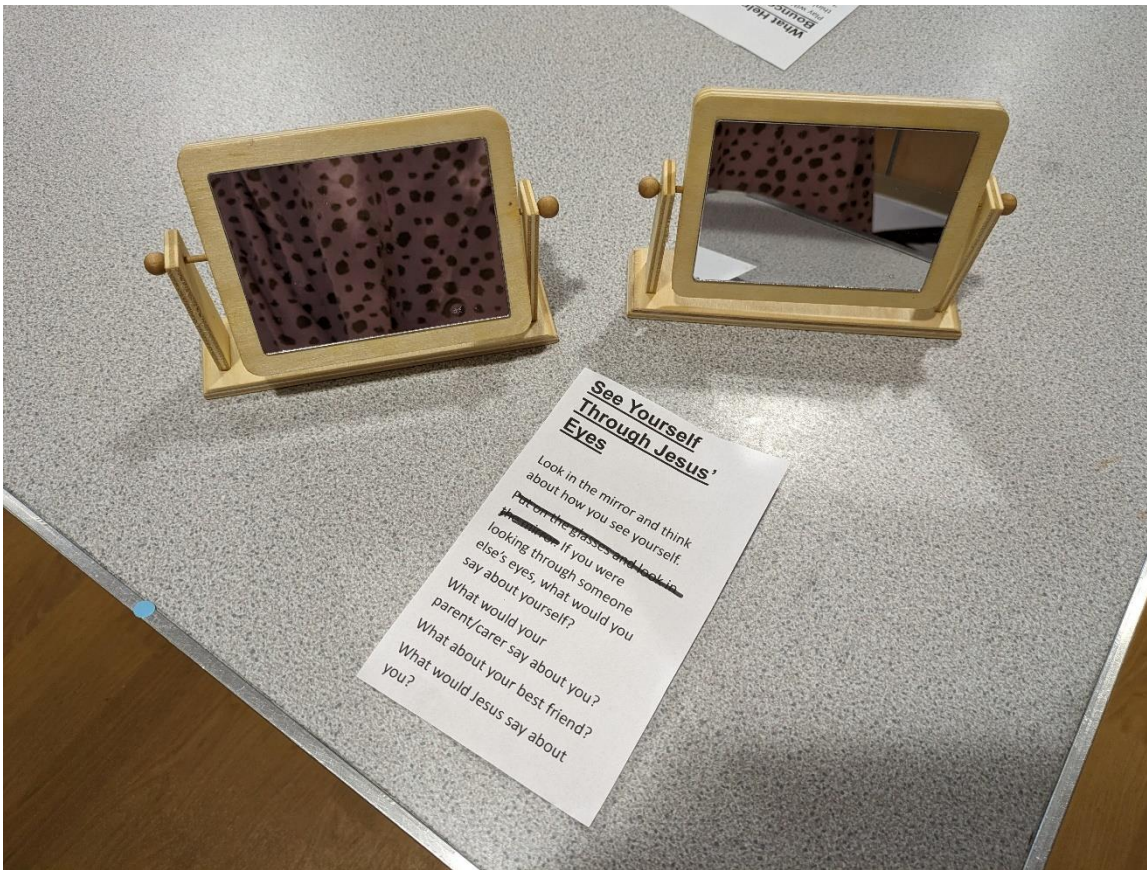
Look in the mirror and think about how you see yourself.

Put on the glasses and look in the mirror. If you were looking through someone else's eyes, what would you say about yourself?

What would your parent/carer say about you?

What about your best friend?

What would Jesus say about you?



6.12: When Have You Felt Deeply Listened to?

Instructions:

Is there a time that you have felt deeply listened to? What did that feel like?

6.13: Hold a Heart

Instructions:

The bible says in 1 John 4 verse 18, Where God's love is, there is no fear, because God's perfect love takes away fear.

Hold a heart and think about someone you love. Do you know that you are loved?



6.14: What Helps You Bounce Back

Instructions:

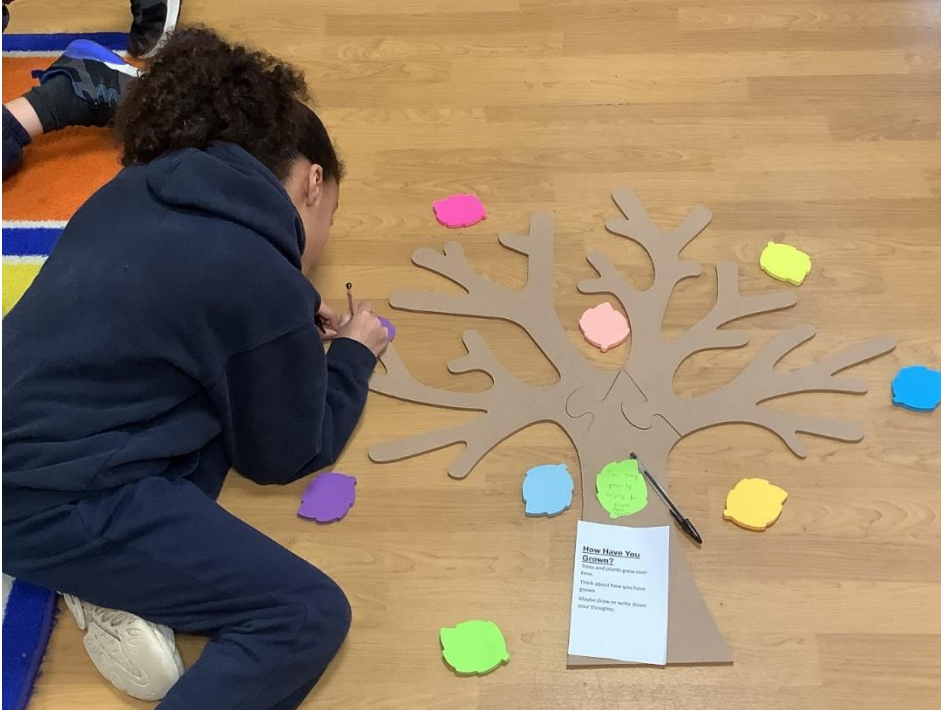
Play with the springs and think about what helps you 'bounce back' when you go through something that's difficult.



6.15: How Have You Grown?

Instructions:

Trees and plants grow loads over time. How have you grown? Maybe draw or write down your thoughts.

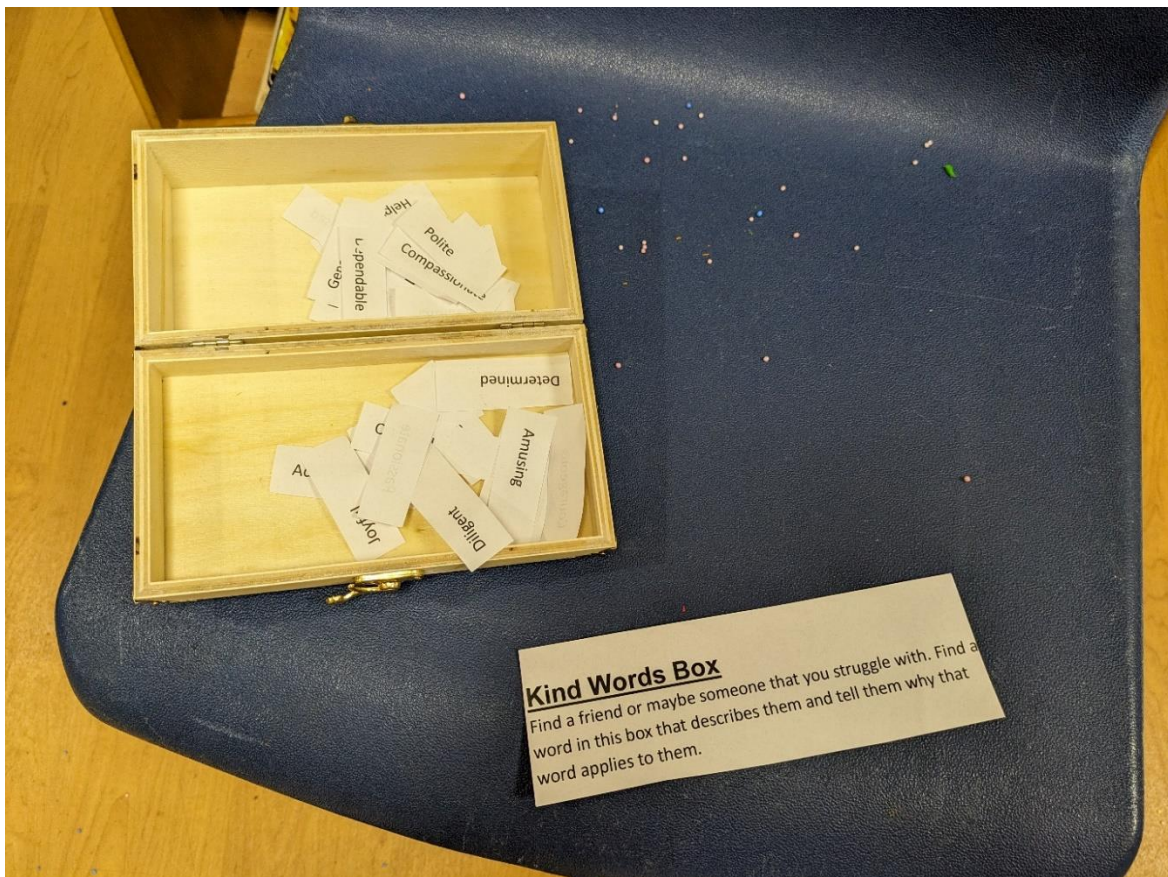


6.16: Kind Words Box

Instructions:

Find a friend or maybe someone that you struggle with. Find a word in this box that describes them and tell them why that word applies to them.

Patience	Enthusiastic	Loving
Peaceful	Faithful	Loyal
Adventurous	Fearless	Observant
Amusing	Generous	Organised
Cheerful	Helpful	Passionate
Compassionate	Hilarious	Polite
Considerate	Humble	Reliable
Courageous	Intelligent	Resilient
Dependable	Joyful	Trustworthy
Determined	Kind	Wise
Diligent	Likable	Zealous

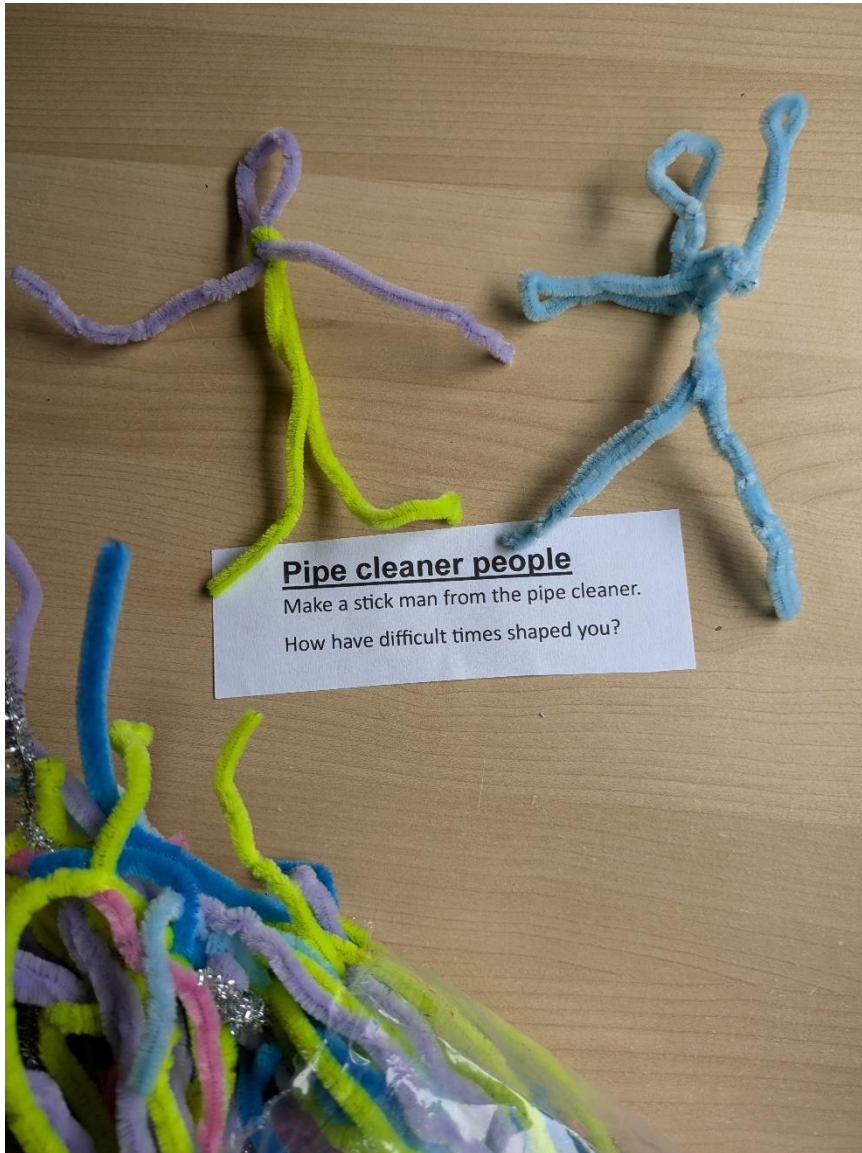


6.17: Pipe cleaner people

Instructions:

Make a stick man from the pipe cleaner.

How have difficult times shaped you?

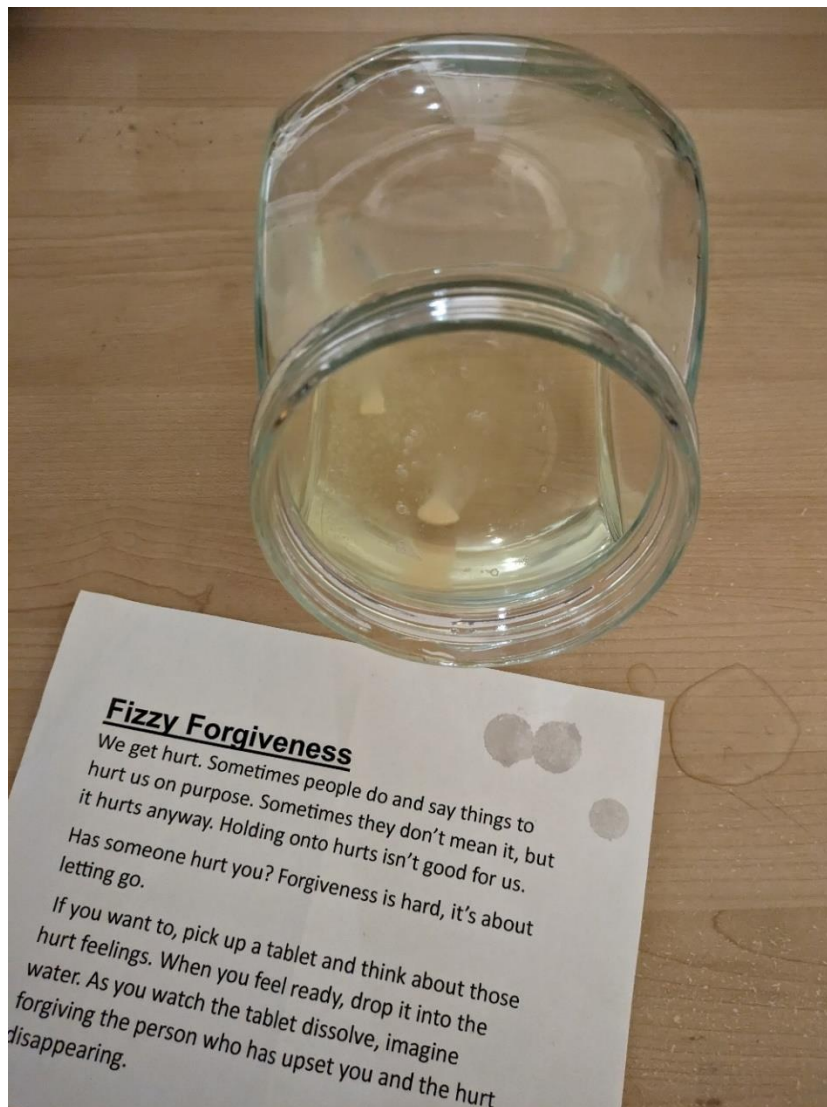


6.18: Fizzy Forgiveness

Instructions:

“We get hurt. Sometimes people do and say things to hurt us on purpose. Sometimes they don’t mean it, but it hurts anyway. Holding onto hurts isn’t good for us. Has someone hurt you? Forgiveness is hard, it’s about letting go.

If you want to, pick up a tablet and think about those hurt feelings. When you feel ready, drop it into the water. As you watch the tablet dissolve, imagine forgiving the person who has upset you and the hurt disappearing” (PSIS, 2024, n.p.).



6.20: Be Still Corner



6.21 Motion Bubbblers



6.22: Thank You Card

Instructions: Who do you need to say thank you to? If you want to, you can make them a card!

