

*First year Assembly 2020:*

*“Welcome”*

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**Setting up the space:**

*Social distancing requirements should be observed in terms of the room set up. A small sacred space at the top of the room might include a candle (with matches), a big pot with some seeds beside it, some primary school uniform jumpers of students (this will have to be organised in advance), a picture of the school crest, and an open bible. You might also have a screen to allow for readings, lyrics of songs etc. to be displayed. Ideally, begin with a song/piece of music from your assembled music group. Alternatively, a small section of an online piece of music relevant to the theme might work well. (See list of suggested songs at the end of the resource).*

This prayer service requires the assistance of two sixth year students (you can of course include more). A number of teachers might also help out.

**Suggested Text for Prayer Service**

**Principal:** Hello everyone. Thanks to \_\_\_\_\_ for that beautiful piece of music. We begin our assembly as we begin every assembly in \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school), by blessing ourselves, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I've met many of you already. You're all very welcome. To help me lead today's assembly, we have two sixth years \_\_\_\_\_ (names of sixth years). And the theme for our assembly this morning/afternoon is very simple. It is 'You are welcome'.

**Sixth year student 1:** Hello everyone! Thanks to \_\_\_\_\_ for that beautiful piece of music. As \_\_\_\_\_ (Principal's name) has already said, you're all very welcome to your first assembly as First Years. It's really great to have you here with us. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm in sixth year and I remember so well my first day in \_\_\_\_\_. (Name of school). But before I get into that, let me introduce a few more people to you. (Student introduces the Year Head and any of the other teachers that are there and the other sixth year student).

**Sixth year student 2:** As \_\_\_\_\_ (principal's name), has already said, in our school, for every assembly, we also recognise that God is among us and with us. To do that, to make God's presence a bit more real to us, we're going to light a candle. This candle is the candle we'll light together every time we pray together. It's the same candle that is lit for all the year groups. I invite now \_\_\_\_\_ (name of first year student) to light our candle on your behalf.



First year student lights candle.

*You might consider having some instrumental music in the background*

**Sixth year student 1:** Thank you \_\_\_\_\_. You'll also notice in our sacred space, a number of the jumpers representing the primary schools you went to. (Sixth year students pick up each jumper in turn and ask those who went to that school to put up their hands. And ask any student who didn't go to any of those primary schools, to maybe say what school they went to).

*(NOTE: if necessary, you can ask students to have parents place the jumpers in clear plastic bags to prevent the need to handle the material itself).*



We know that last year didn't exactly go to plan and you missed out on things like your final day party and your final school tour. For some of you, your Confirmation also had to be re-arranged. We want to just say that so that you don't have to just put on a brave face now that you're in secondary school. It's okay to feel quite angry or upset. We're hear to listen to you. We haven't forgotten that you've come to us with all kinds of different experiences. At the same time, we know you're excited about this new chapter of your life. That's good too!

**Sixth year student 2:** Why else do you think we're including your own sixth class jumpers?

***First years: Interaction here with the gathered group of first years would be good to elicit themes, like remembering, gratitude, challenges of lock down and the time and major moments that were missed, recognising that something new has started .... And so on.***

***The principal/other teachers present may need to help students with this piece.***

**Sixth year student 1:** So we'll just take a few quiet moments to be quiet and still together to really respect what has been shared about our primary schools and our memories of our time in these schools. We thank God for these schools and for the memories you have. We pray especially for all the friends you made in primary school.

**Sixth year student 2:** And of course, as well as acknowledging God with us and introducing ourselves and our teachers, and acknowledging where we have all come from, we also have to introduce one another as part of our prayer. Prayer without saying who we are to one another as a community wouldn't be a proper prayer at all!

Because we're all a bit socially distanced, we're going to do this in a slightly different way. Under your seat you'll find a number. What we want you to do is move carefully around the room and find the one person in the room who has the same number as you and just say 'hello'. You may know them already but remind one another of your name and maybe say one thing about yourself e.g. where you live, if you have brothers/sisters/pets. You get the idea!

## Introducing one another

**Principal:** It's great to hear all that chat and to see you being so friendly and kind to one another. I think our sixth years will agree with me, that if you were to look around this room, the friendships that are starting now over these days will be the ones that will be with you for the rest of your time in the school. I hope you'll always be as open and kind to one another; and work hard not to leave anyone out. What do you think \_\_\_\_\_? (Names of sixth years)

*Two sixth years might at this point say a little bit (about 3 minutes) of the friendships they've made and the welcome they received as first years!*



So we'll listen now to what God teaches us about friendship. And \_\_\_\_\_ (First Year student) is going to read it for us.

A reading from the letter of St Peter

Most importantly, love each other and be kind. Love has a way of not looking at other people's mistakes or what they've done wrong. Love sees things differently.

Welcome one another, without complaining. Remember that each of you has received a special gift. God has shown you his grace in giving you different gifts. We are all different; no two people in this room are the same. And you are like servants who are responsible for using God's gifts. So be good servants and use your gifts to serve each other. Anyone who speaks should speak words from God. The person who serves should serve with the strength that God gives. You should do these things so that in everything God will be praised through Jesus Christ. Power and glory belong to him forever and ever. Amen.

**Principal:** Thanks \_\_\_\_\_ for reading that for us so well. When I heard you read that, and as I looked around the room, I was really, really struck by how delighted I am to see you all. We have been looking forward to welcoming you to our school for a long time. As our First Year students, you are a really important part of our school. You'll be with us for the next five/six years and we'll get to know your talents and gifts. The most important thing though is that we'll get to know and really care about you as people. It's not just about how well you do in your subjects, or how many trophies you get in sports, it's about how happy you are with us, how at home you feel. And the best way to feel happy is to know you are welcome here and that you are really important to us.

**Sixth year student 1:** Thanks for that \_\_\_\_\_ (Principal's name). Do you know how many times I've heard the word 'welcome' already this morning/afternoon? I've been counting! I've heard it 8 times! That's a lot of welcome! I hope you're really feeling it too! You're probably wondering why we're so big into sharing these words of welcome.

**Principal:** We'll listen now to some prayers on this theme of welcome.

\_\_\_\_\_ (names of first year students) will lead us and our response is *Lord gracious hear us.*



Lord, we pray for one another. Help us to grow in confidence through the friends we make. Lord hear us.

Lord, we pray for our new teachers. Help them to be patient with us as we grow in our knowledge and understanding of how the school works. Lord hear us.

Lord, we pray for our parents and families. Help them as they support us so that we can continue to grow strong, kind and true in all that we do. Lord hear us.

Lord, we pray for the sixth years, especially \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (the two sixth years helping us today). May they always know your love as they continue their own growth and learning this year, their last year in \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school). Lord hear us.

Lord, we pray for those who have died or who are sick. We remember in particular \_\_\_\_\_. Lord hear us.

**Principal:** Thank you for those beautiful prayers \_\_\_\_\_. We are coming now to the end of our assembly. Thanks \_\_\_\_\_ (sixth year students' names). We invite you now to join in with a hymn you would have learned in primary school, *Circle of Friends*. You have a new circle of friends now. And with them, and with us, we again welcome you to \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school) and hope you love being here as much as we have loved being here. See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCN1W\\_Re34s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCN1W_Re34s). Before we finish with our song, we bless ourselves, 'In the Name of the Father.....'

Song: *Circle of Friends* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCN1W\\_Re34s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCN1W_Re34s).

