



Reflecting on towers

Towers point to heaven, directing the viewer's eye upwards. They are also used to house the bells which can then be heard out into the surrounding area.

When they were first built towers would have been the tallest buildings around and would have stood as a pointer and reminder of the centrality of the Christian faith. In towns and cities they are now often dwarfed by surrounding buildings, but in villages they are still often the tallest buildings and can be seen long before you reach the outskirts of the settlement.

Towers represent strength (a tower of strength) and security, often being used as a look-out post. They can also be seen as showing wealth and position.

The bells would have been rung for a variety of reasons, including as a call to prayer, in praise of God, as warning of danger, to celebrate or to share good news.

You could use this...

- Before visiting a church with a tower
- To reflect on building in times before machinery
- To encourage children to think about their personal qualities and strength

Bible passages

- Genesis 11:1-9 The tower of Babel
- Psalm 61:3 A tower is used as a symbol of strength and refuge
- Proverbs 18:10 God is portrayed as a strong tower



Watch the whole show

It may be appropriate to show the presentation a few times with a fresh question for each showing. Some of the questions are grouped together as they follow on and could be used together. Pause between the showings to allow children to adjust to the change of focus.

- Which tower would you like to go up? Why?
- If towers are symbols of wealth, which tower was in the wealthiest area? Which was in the poorest area?
- Which tower do you relate to? Which tower calls to you? What does that tower 'say' to you?
- Which tower represents you? Which tower would you like to be?
- What do the towers say about God? What do they say about the church?

Show one tower

Choose a tower appropriate for the questions you are about to ask. If you are using several questions, allow time between the questions for the children to adjust, so they don't feel rushed.

Building the tower

- Imagine building the tower. There wouldn't have been any cranes or machinery to help the builders. Carving would have been done with a hammer and chisel, starting from a block of stone. What would it be like to create a beautiful carving and have it included as part of the tower? What would you have carved?
- The builders would have been in places no-one was going to see again. They could leave secret messages carved in the stone. What message

would you put for future builders to find?

- The tower would have been the tallest building in the area when it was built. What would it have been like for the first people who climbed up the tower? What might have surprised them? What might have frightened them?

Looking up at the tower

- How does looking up at the tower make you feel?
- When the tower was built it would have given the congregation a sense of looking up towards God. Can you see why they felt this? Does this feeling change depending on whether it is a tower or a spire?
- Look at any decoration you can see on the tower. Why was it put up there where it couldn't be seen properly? What would you like to add to the decoration?
- What signs can you see of changes that have been made to the tower over the years?

Looking down from the tower

- Imagine looking out from one of the windows or from the top of the tower. What can you see? How far can you see? What is it like to be able to see so far without being seen by the people you are watching? How far away do you think the bells will be heard?
- Who can you see coming into the church? What are they going to do?
- Who has climbed up this tower before? Why did they come?

The bells ring out

- Why are the bells being rung? What message are they giving?

- Who were the first people to ring these bells? Who were the last people to ring them?
- When might the bells have been rung in celebration?

Imagine

Show one of the photographs of a tower.

Ask the children to imagine standing at the church gate and looking towards the tower.

What can you see? What decorations are there? Are there any windows, turrets or a clock?

Imagine walking up to the door to the tower. This may be a small door round the back.

Open the door carefully. Look inside. It may be dark in there. There might not be a light, so give your eyes time to get used to the dark.

There are some stairs. What are they made from? Is there a handrail? Begin climbing the stairs. They will curve round tightly and be very narrow.

As you climb there might be small windows to look out of. What can you see out of the windows? How does it feel climbing this staircase?

You reach a small room. What can you see? What can you smell? Look out of the windows. How far can you see? Look out of the windows on each side of the tower and see the different views. Who can you see? What are they doing?

In one corner there is a ladder going up onto the roof. Does it look safe? Try it.

Carefully begin to climb the ladder. How does this feel? Are you frightened, or excited?

You come out at the top of the tower. Feel the fresh air. Dare you look over the edge? How far can you see now?

Below you the bells begin to ring. Why are they ringing? Do they sound as if they are celebrating or warning? Let the sound of the bells travel out as far as you can see.

You hear someone else coming up the ladder behind you. Who is it?

When they get their breath back they begin to tell you their story and how they are connected with the tower. Then they ask you about your impression of the tower. What do you think and feel about being here? What do you want to tell them about the tower?

When you are ready begin to climb back down the ladder.

Have another look from the windows in the room on the way down.

Climb down the winding staircase.

Shut the door behind you and pause as you think about what has happened? What was it like climbing the tower? Would you do it again?

As you look back at the tower, how have your thoughts about it changed?



Reflecting on church buildings

These reflections are designed to encourage children to think about and to approach aspects of church buildings from a different perspective. Each gives a series of questions to encourage children's thinking, followed by a longer imaginative exercise, in which they are invited to imagine being in the picture and often have an imaginary conversation with someone about some aspect of the church building. In this they are encouraged to notice how they feel about the building and to see it from a different viewpoint. Many of the questions will fit in well in the 'Learning from religion' strand of the RE syllabus and give opportunities for reflecting and considering. They will also work well in PSHE sessions. Suggestions have been given for times when some of the reflections might be particularly relevant for the children, or appropriate for their learning.

You may choose to show the entire slide show and give the pupils one question to think about as they watch. Or the photographs could be printed out and paper copies displayed for children to use, or as the focus on a display using some of the questions the children have been exploring. You could show the slide show more than once, posing a different question with each showing. Sometimes the questions follow on from each other, others are unconnected.

Rather than showing the series of photographs in the slide show, you could choose one photograph (or use a photo of a similar feature in your local church) and choose a few questions from one section to ask the children. If you visit a church you could use the reflection as part of your session in the church and use the real objects as the focus rather than the photographs.

If pupils are not used to working in this way, you may need to give them some pointers first, or model your thoughts, but emphasise that there is no 'right' answer to the questions, and that their experience is valuable, even if it is completely different to anyone else's. It is a space for their personal reflections.

Some sections will be more appropriate for use in church schools. Use your judgement on which is suitable for your school context and your pupils.

After the reflection allow children the opportunity to share something of what they were thinking about if they want to, but also give them permission not to share it. For some pupils deep issues might be raised and they might prefer to talk to you or another member of staff about this quietly later.

The reflections could be used alongside a story for collective worship, and Bible references are given for related passages you might include.