

Resource reviews

- ★★★★★ Absolutely perfect!
- ★★★★☆ Very highly recommended
- ★★★☆☆ Highly recommended
- ★★☆☆☆ Recommended
- ★☆☆☆☆ Recommended with reservations
- ✘☆☆☆☆ Not recommended

Secret Never to be Told

Cathie Bartlam, 2003
Scripture Union
paperback, 128pp, £3.99
illustrations: none
ISBN 0-86201-922-2
use: church youth groups / small secondary school groups



Secret Never to be Told is part of Scripture Union's series of fictional books entitled 'Tackling tough issues through fiction'. This book looks at the issue of abuse – particularly sexual abuse – in families. The story is sensitively written from the view point of Abi who discovers her friend, Karen, is being sexually abused by her father.

As Abi (who is a church-going Christian) struggles to keep Karen's secret we hear her questioning the concept of God the Father and the effectiveness of intercessory prayer. During the story we also see the effect of 'the secret' on Abi and Karen's friendship and on wider relationships.

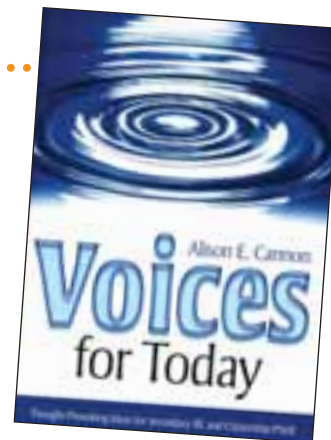
In the end the secret is shared and we see the role of youth leaders (with whom the secret is initially shared) and social services in such cases.

Secret Never to be Told would be an excellent discussion-starter for a group of young people who enjoy reading. It would be easy to read part of the story to a group and then invite them to discuss what they think characters should do next. Nevertheless, I hesitate to recommend it for general school use because of its overtly Christian content. Perhaps it would be more appropriate for use in a Christian group within a school.

REVIEWER Jane Mainwaring, Team Vicar of St Mark's in the Parish of Hitchin, Hertfordshire.

Voices for Today

Alison E Cannon, 2005
RMEP
paperback, 80pp, £22.95
illustrations: black and white line drawings
ISBN 1-85175-327-3
use: 11–14 Citizenship, PSHE, RE and Old Testament study



Eighty pages packed full of ideas and worksheets all based on the Old Testament, yet all totally relevant to today's classroom. It is a real pleasure to find a book that uses the Old Testament in such a creative and academically challenging way. I can forgive the slightly 'page flicking' layout and the need to enlarge all the worksheets because that is made up for by the excellent balance of RE and Citizenship/PSHE ideas. Each lesson needs some customisation but contains a useful mixture of RE and PSHE tasks, although this book could be used solely as a subject specific resource. The information and task sheets are easy to use, and a financially challenged department could OHT them or use them as 'hand-backs'. They would also make good homework task sheets leaving lesson time for some of the suggested questions, discussions and interesting ideas in the 'further activities' sections after each unit.

The assessment activities are intended to be used by all abilities, although perhaps cater for the more able better than the less able (which is itself a useful resource). Each lesson idea details adaptations that can be made for the able and talented and for the less able students.

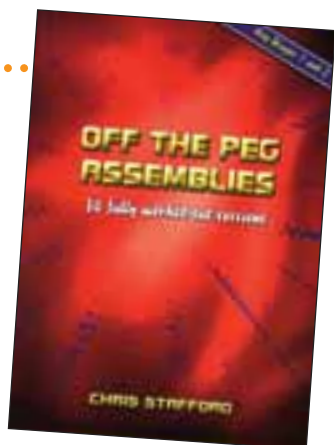
There are tables at the front of the book which show how the content links with the National Non-Satutory Framework for RE and guidelines for PSHE and Citizenship in England, the programmes of study for RE in Northern Ireland and Wales, and the guidelines for Religious and Moral Education in Scotland. There are also pronunciation guides, a map and timeline, all of which are useful in each unit.

I think this book will cause departments to increase their use of the Old Testament at KS3 and review their schemes of work to fit in these excellent ideas.

REVIEWER Jocelyn Sumner, Head of Religion, Ethics and Philosophy and Initial Teacher Training Co-ordinator, Teign School, Kingsteignton, Devon.

Off the Peg Assemblies

Chris Stafford, 2004
Kevin Mayhew Ltd
paperback, 104pp, £15.99
illustrations: black and white line drawings
ISBN 1-84417-211-2
use: primary school assemblies / all age
worship in church



Off The Peg Assemblies offers 30 sessions suitable for children in Key Stages 1 and 2. Each ready-to-use assembly includes a prayer, a list of suggested songs and at least one Bible reference.

All of the prayers are direct and to the point without being shallow or feeling rushed. Most prayers begin with the words 'Dear God' and, although they are not overtly Trinitarian, they are clearly Christian. One prayer (for the assembly entitled: Jesus ascended into heaven) is prayed to 'Lord Jesus'. Another (When the Spirit came) is addressed to the Holy Spirit.

Most of the assemblies include fool-proof tips for creating simple-but-stunning visual aids (eg instructions for creating an extendable paper ladder to accompany the story about Jacob's dream). Others include a photocopiable resource or a suggestion for using music to set the scene.

The 30 assemblies are divided into four sections. There are 11 assemblies about biblical characters; eight about the life of Christ/the Christian life; eight about The Lord's Prayer; and three about the environment.

Sadly, only one of the 11 assemblies about biblical characters focuses on a female character (Jairus' daughter). I was similarly disappointed to find that – having made the effort to include a section about the environment (which I would have been tempted to call Caring for God's World) – it only comprised three assemblies.

Nonetheless, if I set aside these two subjective criticisms, I must say that this is one of the best assembly books I have read. Teachers, schools' workers and preachers looking for lively and innovative ways to share biblical truths with young people would do well to get their hands on this resource. As a Methodist Local preacher I shall certainly be using many of the ideas in church – for the benefit of adults as well as children.

REVIEWER Rupert Kaye, ACT Chief Executive.

Flatpack: Ready-To-Go Assembly Ideas for 11–14s

Multiple contributors, 2004
Scripture Union
paperback, 128pp, £7.99
illustrations: none
ISBN 1-84427-099-8
use: secondary school collective worship



There are many publications focussing on corporate worship that are broadly Christian, but they are not all as concise and helpful as this modest-looking book. Many 11–14 year old students have low expectations where assemblies are concerned. Now, thanks to *Flatpack*, they could be in for a treat if the person delivering the act of worship has prepared and presented the material in the manner the author had in mind.

Each assembly is Bible-based, with an aim and activities directly linked to Scripture. The themes are relevant, dealing with matters on the minds of young people, such as 'How should I live?' 'What am I worth?' 'What about God?' as well as ideas for celebrating the important festivals of the Christian calendar. The 'Tools Needed' section is helpful with lots of imaginative ideas for introducing a theme and getting (and keeping) everyone's attention.

Some assemblies include an opportunity to use a PowerPoint presentation and, for the less technical, there are computer-free alternatives.

The assemblies are probably more appropriate for a year group rather than a whole school assembly as volunteers are needed and responses are required from the 'audience'. This is much more easily controlled and contained in a smaller group.

It is important to read the introduction, which sets out the framework for collective worship. This has been modified to make visitors to schools aware of the current legislation.

It should prove a very useful resource for any teacher or person responsible for presenting an assembly, or a church youth group exploring ideas of life, faith and God.

REVIEWER Jean Watson, Teacher of Religious Education, Sutton High School, Sutton, Surrey.