



Reflecting on doors

Doors are the way in and out of a building, but they can also symbolise changes and movement, so a man carries his new bride across the threshold, or we vow never to darken someone's door again.

Doors can also be used as a symbol of passage from one stage in life to another. They can be difficult to go through; when going somewhere new for the first time, getting through the door can be the hardest part emotionally. Going 'through the door' can be the first step on a new adventure, on holiday, meeting new people, learning new skills or it can be a point of moving on, leaving the past behind. In some of the reflections the door is used as a symbol for changes that are occurring for children.

Jesus described himself as a door (sometimes translated as gate) the route to security with him for those who believe in him (John 10:7-9).

Bible passages

- I am the door (John 10:7)
- I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God (Psalm 84:10)
- Knock and the door will be opened to you (Luke 11:9)
- When you pray, go into your room, close the door . . . (Matthew 6:6)
- The prison door flew open (Acts 16)
- The disciples have the doors locked through fear (John 20:26)
- Blood on the doorframe at Passover (Exodus 12)
- Building the doors to the temple (1 Kings 6)
- The whole town gathered at Jesus' doorway (Mark 1:33)

You could use this

- Before visiting your local church
- When children are coming up to a time of change
- After studying a period of history
- To introduce work on churches
- To end work on churches



Watch the whole slide show

It may be appropriate to show all the photos a few times, with a fresh question for each showing. Some of the questions are grouped as they could be used as a sequence. Allow time between showings for children to adjust to the new question.

- Which doors do you want to go through and why?
- Which doors don't you want to go through? Why?
- Think about each door and how you would feel if you were standing outside it.
- Pick a door that is in some way like your life at the moment. Choose a door that you would like your life to be more like.
- At a time of change (new classes, school, etc.) ask the children to consider which door is in some way like what's about to happen. Emphasise that the door doesn't need to look like the new door they will be going through, but will have some characteristics that are similar – like being exciting, scary, hard to open, battered . . . Which door is in some way like their new school/class? Why have they chosen that door? Which door would they prefer? What is it about that door that is more attractive? What would have to happen to make the new situation like that door?

Show one door

Choose a door that invokes an emotional response, rather than one that you think will make children respond in a particular way, or you could use a photograph of the door to your local church. If you are using several questions, allow plenty of time between the questions, so the children don't feel rushed.

The first person through the door

- Who do you think was the first person to go through this door?
- What did the door look like then?
- What were they wearing?
- What was their life like?
- What was the most important thing happening at the time?
- What would it have felt like to be the first person through the door?

The door today

- Who was the last person to go through this door?
- Why were they going through the door?
- What were they carrying?
- What sort of people go through this door on a Sunday?
- What would you like to say to them, or ask them?
- Who goes through this door during the rest of the week?
- What are they going to do?

Stories

- If this door could tell you a story of an important person who had passed through, what might that story be?
- What does this door say about the building?
- What does this door 'say' to you?

Behind this door

- Is this door welcoming or frightening?
- What do you think is behind this door?
- What might it feel like to open this door?
- What might it sound like?
- What might you see when you opened the door?
- How would it feel to walk through the door?
- What would you do in this building?

Jesus through the door

- Has Jesus ever been through this door?
- If he asked you to go through the door with him, would you go?
- What would it be like to go through the door with Jesus?
- What do you think there is behind this door that it would be important to show Jesus?

Imagine

Show one of the photographs of a door.

Ask the children to imagine standing outside this door.

What can you hear, smell, see?

How does it feel to be standing here? What are they thinking about?

What might be on the other side of the door?

Imagine walking up to the door.

Put your hand on the handle or the door. What does that feel like?

Turn the handle and push the door.

Is it easy or hard? Is it heavy, quiet, noisy, stiff . . . ?

Listen.

Allow your eyes to adjust.

What do you see

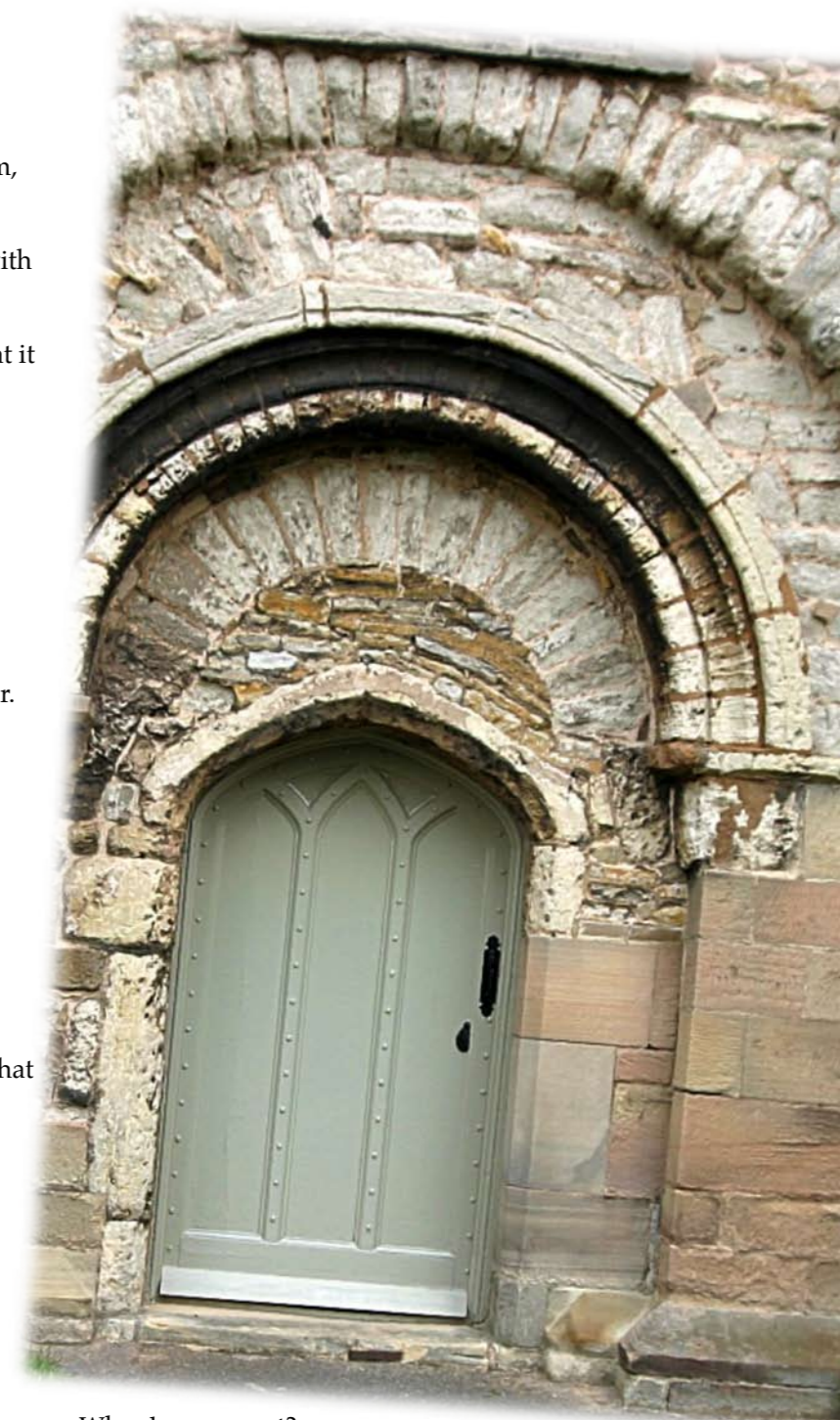
hear

smell?

Walk in. How does it feel?

What are you thinking?

Have a good look round.



Who do you meet?

What do they say? Have a conversation with them.

When you're ready, say thank you and good bye to them and leave.

Shut the door behind you.

Pause when you get back outside. What was that like?



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.