

PLANNING AN INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE FOR THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

The most important thing we can give children when they start school for the first time,
or return to school, is the knowledge that Jesus loves them.

It's an important theme for their parents, for people who work in schools,
and for people who are no longer directly involved in schools.
In planning this service, try to provide a setting where Jesus tells people that he loves them
and people have the opportunity respond to that love.

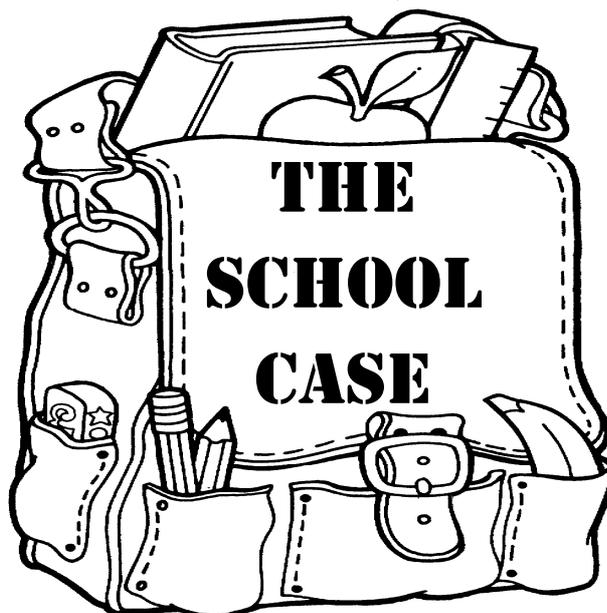
THEME

Jesus loves me!

BIBLE BASIS

I pray that Christ will live in your hearts by faith
and that your life will be strong in love and be built on love.
And I pray that you and all God's holy people will have the power
to understand the greatness of Christ's love —
how wide and how long and how high and how deep that love is.
Christ's love is greater than anyone can ever know,
but I pray that you will be able to know that love.
Then you can be filled with the fullness of God.
Ephesians 3:17,18

A SAMPLE SERVICE



GENERAL NOTES

INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

Intergenerational worship is, first and foremost, worship — an encounter between God and God's people of all ages.

Intergenerational worship recognises the children in the worshiping congregation and 'the child within' each older person.

Intergenerational (or all-age) worship takes seriously the idea that people of all ages worship together in the body of Christ. And that people of all ages respect their fellow worshippers of all ages.

Worshippers — young, old and in-between — can also be involved in

- ♦ planning the worship service
- ♦ preparing for worship
- ♦ inviting people to worship
- ♦ and leading worship.

Carefully planned intergenerational worship incorporates several of the senses, movement, and elements of surprise, fun and awe.

CELEBRATION OF A MILESTONE

A milestone in the life of any member of the congregation is significant for all members of the extended church family.

In this service the whole church family celebrates the milestone of starting a new school year with children and their parents. The celebration can extend to teachers, school staff and volunteers in schools.

The service can include a special blessing for children who are starting school for the first time.

There will be people in the intergenerational mix who are not directly involved in schools and the school calendar. But all adults will have some memories — good and bad — of their own school years.

The 'Jesus loves me' theme is universal and applies to everyone in the congregation, not just to those who are going to school.

USING THIS DOCUMENT

These notes were developed by the Resource Centre for Children's and Family Ministry of the Uniting Church in South Australia.

The resource is free to congregations using it for planning worship. You have permission to copy any parts of this document that you need to in preparing a start-of-school service.

This permission does not extend to music or other items referred to in the notes.

This document contains

- ♦ **GENERAL NOTES** about planning the service
- ♦ **EXTRA 'Jesus Loves Me' RESOURCES:**
 - Bible versesp. 6
 - 'Jesus loves me' song verses.....p. 7
 - Other songs about Jesus' lovep. 8
 - 'Jesus loves me' craftsp. 9
 - 'Jesus loves me' stories.....p. 10
- ♦ **A SAMPLE SERVICE — The School Case**
 - Outline.....p. 12
 - Scriptp. 13
 - Dramap. 17

Read through all the material. Discuss it with your planning team. You may want to design your own worship service using some of the resources or use the sample service.

INVITATIONS

You may distribute invitations to your special start-of-school-year event as widely as possible. Some suggestions:

- Invite every 5-12-year old child on your contact list.
- Invite children and families during any special Christmas celebrations.
- Invite grandparents/great-grandparents to bring their grandchildren — and the children's parents.
- Invite children from your local primary school. You might work with the chaplain to see if invitations can be sent through start-of-school year information packets. Alternatively, display a poster or have some printed invitations available where people register children and collect books before the school term begins.
- Contact local kindergartens or pre-schools and ask them to give invitations to children who will be starting school this year.

HOSPITALITY

If you invite children and families from outside your regular worshiping community, it is vital that you plan carefully how to welcome visitors. Since school aged children are guests of honour, they should be given a special welcome.

A hospitality team may be made up of people from several generations. They may

meet prior to the service and work out ways to make children and families feel welcome. They may recruit 'greeters' of all ages to welcome people when they arrive and help people find suitable seating.

Where possible people should sit in family groups. People worshiping alone may be encouraged to sit with a family group.

Families with young children may want to sit near the front or on a central aisle so that the children can more easily see what is happening.

Greeters may also assist people as required during the service.

Hospitality might also include car-parking directions, information about location of facilities, even a 'cuppa' and nibbles or a barbecue lunch after the service.

MUSIC

Music is an important aspect of most worship services. However some visitors may not be comfortable with the practice of congregational singing. Make it as easy as possible for them to join in, eg words (and music) easy to locate and strong vocal leadership. Give permission to 'just listen' or to 'join in as you are comfortable'.

Music may be performed/led by an individual or a group — an existing choir or band, or an intergenerational group organised specifically for this service.

Use your regular system for displaying words/music — books, service bulletins, OHT, PowerPoint.

Choose music about Jesus' love. See page 8.

Choose child-friendly music for the service and present it in a child-friendly way. Try to have a song leader with some 'Wiggles' or 'High Five' flair to encourage children to sing and move to the music.

Since the theme of the service is 'Jesus loves me', use the song as extensively as possible throughout the service. See page 7 for words to 'Jesus loves me'.

Use either recorded versions or your own musicians playing the tune as people arrive, during the collection of offerings, as people leave and any other 'quiet spots in the service'.

'Jesus loves me' is one of the most frequently translated gospel songs in the world. People in your worshiping community may know it and be able to sing it in languages other than

English; someone may be able to sign it in Auslan.

Some of the versions of 'Jesus loves me' on YouTube will give you ideas, eg:

- Gaither Family Vocal Band — full concert setting
- Whitney Houston — singing and playing a grand piano
- Jeremy Camp — rock version
- Words and graphics plus female voice singing (jimwiton)
- Children in backyard singing (Willeigh85)
- Words and graphics with children singing (Christian Rock Worship)

WORSHIP LEADERS

The service can be led by one, two, or a number of people.

Try to have as your main worship leader — the one who serves as 'host' or 'compere' tying together the various elements of the service — someone who can relate well with young children. They will not 'talk down' to the children, but will make it clear that the children are central to all that happens.

The minister/pastor/priest may take this role, or may lead only sections of the service that your church reserves for ordained persons.

A number of other people of any age may:

- pray/read prayers
- read Bible passages
- collect offerings.

CLOWNS: Everyone — or nearly everyone — loves a clown. The presence of clowns at a worship service can emphasise the all-age aspect of the service.

Clowns can capture the interest, especially of younger people. Be aware, though, that some very young children are frightened by people in clown-face, particularly if they come too close.

One or more clowns can be involved in leading the service.

The clowns can have a variety of roles, from greeting, to assisting with moving people, to the special clown pantomime: 'How much does Jesus love you?'

If you have a craft activity before the service or during any 'adults only' portions of the service, clowns can circulate, help as needed and generally help people feel comfortable and enjoy themselves.

SERMON

The sermon for an intergenerational service should be an all age sermon, ie short, just one main point, using stories rather than long explanations. It can use visuals or be in interactive or dialogue form.

If the sermon is 'adult only', eg aimed especially at parents of school children, provide an alternative activity, eg a craft, for children.

The text for this service could be the song 'Jesus loves me' or any of the verses listed on page 6.

Alternatively you might develop Gary Chapman's 'love languages' approach found in *God's Love Languages* and *Five Love Languages of Children* (Chapman & Campbell).

OFFERING

Use your regular format for receiving offerings.

DRAMA

A drama is a good way of capturing people's attention, telling a story or expressing the good news in a different way.

These notes include two dramas:

- How much God loves you — a brief clown sketch
- The school case — a full-blown detective skit

The drama team will need to be well-rehearsed to present a performance that shows that this service is important.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

Giving people a chance to leave behind old problems and *start out* fresh in the new school year is very much in line with the theme of this service.

Be sensitive as to how you do this, particularly if there are visitors. Use your regular format and alter/simplify the language. Or use a special child-friendly format.

PRAYER / COUNSELING

People attending this service may be at a critical point in their life as a family. They may want someone to talk with them confidentially or to pray with them.

Plan what you can offer and, at the conclusion of the worship service. Let people know what options are available to them and how they can access them.

HOLY COMMUNION

In a deliberately intergenerational service, it is not appropriate to exclude part of the congregation (or visitors) from any aspect of the service. If your practice is to exclude children from the sacrament, it may be best not to have communion at an invitational / intergenerational service.

REHEARSAL

Because this service may be different from your usual worship pattern, and may involve a number of different people, a rehearsal will be necessary.

A complete walk-through will pinpoint any logistical problems, allow the worship leader/s to fine-tune instructions and ensure that the service itself runs smoothly.

The rehearsal time should also include

- prayer for the planning and presentation of the service
- prayer for the worship leaders and those who will worship, particularly those who come in special need of healing
- a reminder that this is worship, not a talent show. Leading worship is a special form of worship.

MEMENTOES

An important element of intergenerational worship is that people of all ages (particularly parents with children) share an experience that they can talk about at home — and that they take home something to remind them of the experience and encourage family conversation.

As part of this service give a 'Jesus loves me' memento. Children can make their own memento (see page 9).

Alternatively purchase a tract with the 'Jesus loves me' message or have adults in the congregation make something with the message as a gift for the children.

Something that can be packed into school cases is ideal.

Lutheran Tract Mission* has a number of appropriate tracts, cards and mini-posters.

If you have a large number of children, you might look into having 'Jesus loves you/Jesus loves me' wristbands. Google 'wristband manufacturer' for contacts.

* Lutheran Tract Mission
175 Archer Street, North Adelaide SA, 5006
Email: tracts@lll.org.au
Tel (08) 8360 7200 Fax (08) 8267 1722

JESUS' LOVE — BIBLE VERSES

The whole Bible can be read as God's love story for the people of this world. This is summed up as:

- God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life. *John 3:16*

Many other Bible passages speak of God's love in Jesus. Here are some of them.

- The Lord passed in front of Moses and said, 'I am the LORD. The LORD is a God who shows mercy, who is kind, who doesn't become angry quickly, who has great love and faithfulness and is kind to thousands of people. *Exodus 34:6*
- If you pay attention to these laws and obey them carefully, the LORD your God will keep his agreement and show his love to you, as he promised your ancestors. He will love and bless you. *Deuteronomy 7:12,13*
- LORD, God of Israel, there is no god like you on heaven or on earth. You keep your agreement of love with your servants who truly follow you. *2 Chronicles 6:14*
- But you are a forgiving God. You are kind and full of mercy. You do not become angry quickly, and you have great love. So you did not leave them. *Nehemiah 9:17b*
- The LORD shows his true love every day. At night I have a song, and I pray to my living God. *Psalms 41:8*
- God, be merciful to me because you are loving. Because you are always ready to be merciful, wipe out all my wrongs. *Psalms 51:1*
- Praise God, who did not ignore my prayer or hold back his love from me. *Psalms 66:20*
- But I pray to you, LORD, for favor. God, because of your great love, answer me. *Psalms 69:13*
- But, LORD, you are a God who shows mercy and is kind. You don't become angry quickly. You have great love and faithfulness. *Psalms 86:15*

- Give thanks to the God of gods; His love continues forever. *Psalms 136:2*
- I love you people with a love that will last forever. That is why I have continued showing you kindness. *Jeremiah 31:3*
- The LORD your God is with you; the mighty One will save you. He will rejoice over you. You will rest in his love. He will sing and be joyful about you. *Zephaniah 3:17*
- It was almost time for the Jewish Passover Feast. Jesus knew that it was time for him to leave this world and go back to the Father. He had always loved those who were his own in the world, and he loved them all the way to the end. *John 13:1*
- Jesus answered, 'If people love me, they will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. *John 14:23*
- I loved you as the Father loved me. Now remain in my love. *John 15:9*
- And this hope will never fail us, because God has poured out his love to fill our hearts. He gave us his love through the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us. *Romans 5:5*
- But God shows his great love for us in this way; Christ died for us while we were still sinners. *Romans 5:8*
- Yes! I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor ruling spirits, nothing now, nothing in the future, no powers, nothing above us, nothing below us, nor anything else in the whole world will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 8:38,39*
- The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. *2 Corinthians 13:14*
- I was put to death on the cross with Christ, and I do not live anymore — it is Christ who lives in me. I still live in my body, but I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself to save me. *Galatians 2:20*

- I pray that Christ will live in your hearts by faith and that your life will be strong in love and be built on love. And I pray that you and all God's holy people will have the power to understand the greatness of Christ's love — how wide and how long and how high and how deep that love is. Christ's love is greater than anyone can ever know, but I pray that you will be able to know that love. Then you can be filled with the fullness of God. *Ephesians 3:17-19*
 - You are God's children whom he loves, so try to be like him. Live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God. *Ephesians 5:2*
 - God has chosen you and made you his holy people. He loves you. *Colossians 3:12*
 - God loved us, and through his grace he gave us a good hope and encouragement that continues forever. *2 Thessalonians 2:16*
 - But the grace of our Lord was fully given to me, and with that grace came the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. *1 Timothy 1:14*
 - But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour was shown, he saved us because of his mercy. *Titus 3:4,5*
- If someone obeys God's teaching, then in that person God's love has truly reached its goal. *1 John 2:5*
 - The Father has loved us so much that we are called children of God. *1 John 3:1*
 - This is how we know what real love is: Jesus gave his life for us. So we should give our lives for our brothers and sisters. *1 John 3:16*
 - This is how God showed his love to us: He sent his one and only Son into the world so that we could live through him. This is what real love is: it is not our love for God; it is God's love for us in sending his Son to be the way to take away our sins. *1 John 4:9,10*
 - And so we know the love that God has for us, and we trust that love. God is love. Those who live in love live in God and God lives in them. *1 John 4:16*
 - Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the Lord Jesus Christ with his mercy to give you life forever. *Jude 1:21*
 - He (Jesus) is the One who loves us, who made us free from our sins with the blood of his death. He made us to be a kingdom of priests who serve God his Father. To Jesus Christ be glory and power forever and ever! Amen. *Revelation 1:5,6*

*All Bible quotations from
the New Century Version*

'JESUS LOVES ME' SONG VERSES

Many verses have been written to the song 'Jesus loves me'. Here are some of them. In planning a service you will need to choose the verses you want to use. This may be dictated by a theme you wish to emphasise or by other resources you choose to use.

This refrain follows every verse.

Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
The Bible tells me so.

THE ORIGINAL VERSES (by Anna Warner)

Jesus loves me! This I know,
for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong;
they are weak, but he is strong.

Jesus loves me! This I know,
as he loved so long ago.
Taking children on his knee,
saying, 'Let them come to me.'

Jesus loves me still today;
walking with me on my way,
wanting as a friend to give
light and love to all who live.

Jesus loves me! He who died
Heaven's gate to open wide —
he will wash away my sin,
let his little child come in.

Jesus loves me! He will stay
close beside me all the way.
Thou hast bled and died for me,
I will henceforth live for thee.

Jesus loves me! Loves me still,
though I'm very weak and ill —
that I might from sin be free
bled and died upon the tree.

NEWER VERSES (origins unknown)

Jesus loves me when I'm good;
when I do the things I should.
Jesus loves me when I'm bad,
but it makes him oh so sad.

I love Jesus, does he know?
Have I ever told him so?
Jesus likes to hear me say,
that I love him every day!

Yes, I love Jesus!
Yes, I love Jesus!
Yes, I love Jesus!
In prayer I tell him so.

Now you've heard the true story,
how Jesus died for you and me.
Accept him in your heart today,
then in heaven with him you'll stay!

Jesus loves me this I know
and I pray to him alone.
And his light shines through in me
for God's people to all see!

Jesus died upon the tree.
Yes, he died for you and me.
On the third day he arose —
shout it out till the whole world knows!

CHILDREN'S DAILY LIFE VERSES

Jesus loves me as I dress
and I try to do my best.
Upside down and inside out
sometimes clothes can make me pout!

Jesus loves me as I eat
apples, oranges, eggs and meat.
Apple juice is in my cup
you can watch me drink it up!

'SENIORS' VERSES — singing a few of these will add to the intentional 'all age' aspect of the worship.

Jesus loves me, this I know,
though my hair is white as snow.
Though my sight is growing dim,
still he bids me trust in him.

Though my steps are oh, so slow,
with my hand in his I'll go.
On through life, let come what may,
he'll be there to lead the way.

When the nights are dark and long,
in my heart he puts a song.
Telling me in words so clear,
'Have no fear, for I am near'.

When my work on earth is done,
and life's victories have been won,
He will take me home above,
then I'll understand his love.

OTHER SONGS ABOUT JESUS' LOVE

Here's another traditional chorus that originated about the same time as Jesus loves me, and has a very similar theme.

I'm so glad that Jesus loves me (Bliss)

1) I am so glad that our Father in Heav'n
tells of his love in the book he has giv'n.
Wonderful things in the Bible I see,
this is the dearest, that Jesus loves me.

Refrain:

*I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me.
I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves even me.*

2) Though I forget him, and wander away,
still he does love me wherever I stray.
Back to his dear loving arms I do flee,
when I remember that Jesus loves me.

Refrain

3) Oh, if there's only one song I can sing,
when in his beauty I see the great King,
this shall my song through eternity be,
'Oh, what a wonder that Jesus loves me!'

Refrain

4) Jesus loves me, and I know I love him;
love brought him down my poor soul to redeem.
Yes, it was love made him die on the tree;
oh, I am certain that Jesus loves me!

Refrain

5) If one should ask of me, how can I tell?
Glory to Jesus, I know very well!
God's Holy Spirit with mine doth agree,
constantly witnessing Jesus loves me.

Refrain

6) In this assurance I find sweetest rest.
Trusting in Jesus, I know I am blessed.
Satan, dismayed, from my soul now doth flee,
when I just tell him that Jesus loves me.

Refrain

Following are some other songs about Jesus' love to consider:

CHILDREN'S SONGS

- Jesus' love is very wonderful
- Jesus loves the little children
- I know God loves me
- God's love (that he sent us his Son)
- God's love is so high you can't get over it (Once there was a negro spiritual 'My God is so high', then Elvis made his own popular version, later it was sung as 'God's love is so high' — a great interpretation of the theme verse — if you can find or remember it.)

Contemporary worship songs

- *Because of your love* (Fragar) AWC #3
- *Forever and always* (Bullock) AWC2 #17
- *I am carried* (Bullock) AWC #9
- *Just let me say* (Bullock) AWC #64
- *Power of your love* (Bullock) AWC #68
- *So you would come* (Fragar) AWC #4
- *The love of God can do* (Fragar) AWC #17
- *The steadfast love of the Lord* (Makedonez) AWC2 #82
- *With your love* (Bullock) AWC #56
- *You gave me love* (Morgan) AWC2 #96
- *Your love is higher than the mountains* (Bullock) AWC #140
- *Your love keeps following me* (Fragar) AWC #131

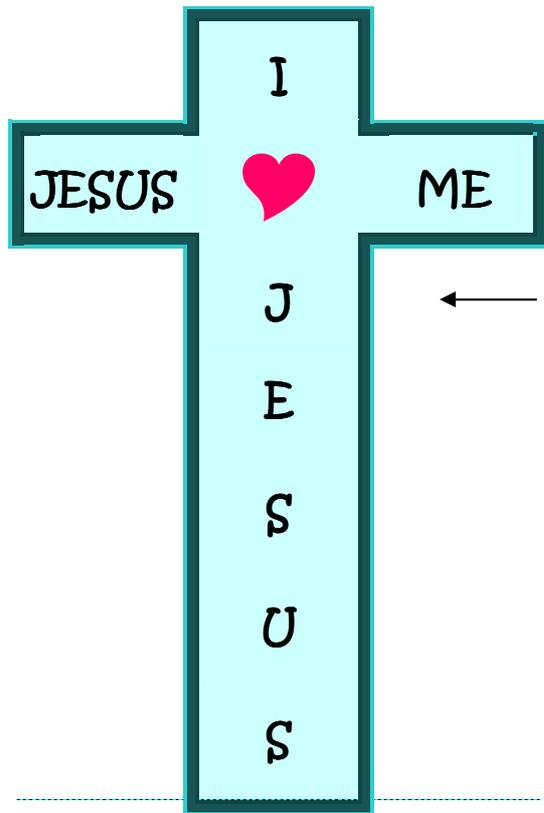
Traditional hymns

- *Jesus, Lover of my soul* (Wesley) AHB 139
- *Jesus, Thy boundless love to me* (Gerhardt/Wesley) AHB 462
- *Love divine, all loves excelling* (Wesley) AHB 148
- *My song is love unknown* (Crossman) AHB 257
- *O love, that will not let me go* (Matheson) AHB 525

AWC = Australian Worship Collection
AWC2 = Australian Worship Collection vol 2
AHB = The Australian Hymn Book

'JESUS LOVES ME' CRAFTS

Here are some crafts with the 'Jesus loves me' message that students can take to school in their cases or backpacks.



PLASTIC JESUS LOVES ME CROSS

What you need for each cross:

Clear plastic sheets, eg OHT sheet (1/4 A-4 size)
 Permanent textas that will work on the plastic.
 Printed cross pattern like the one here.
 Scissors
 Paper clips

What you do:

Clip the clear plastic over the pattern
 Use permanent textas to trace the pattern design onto the plastic.
 Decorate as desired
 Cut out the cross shape.

WOODEN JESUS LOVES ME HEART

Idea from Sarah A. Keith ChristianCrafters.Com Copyright 2004

What You Need:

Unpainted wooden hearts sponges
 acrylic paint trays black marker

What you do:

Write child's name on back.
 Pour paint into trays.
 Dip sponges into paint and dab the heart with colour. Be careful not to muddy the colours.
 Once the paint is dry, write, 'Jesus loves me' on the front of the heart.

Optional

Spray with fixative; glue magnet to the back.



JESUS LOVES ME KEY RING

What you need:

Plastic key rings with space for inserts (try 'cheap shops' and marketing suppliers)
 Light card Markers Scissors

What you do:

Write messages on the front and back of the card as shown.
 Insert the card into the frame.

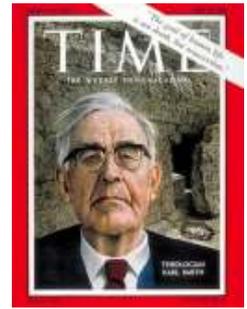
* The Resource Centre for Children's and Family Ministry (8285 7104) has a badge machine (with key ring capability) available for churches to use.

'JESUS LOVES ME' STORIES

THE FAMOUS THEOLOGIAN Karl Barth had a tremendous grasp of the Scriptures. He had studied for many years, and was a sought-after speaker. One day, someone asked him what was the greatest theological discovery he had made during his life. He thought for some time and finally said:

"Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so!"

All of his years of study and meditation had left him with one indelible impression. The song he had learned as a small child, burned in his mind and the simplicity of this truth jumped to the forefront of his mind all those years later.



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THE REV. DR. JACOB CHAMBERLAIN, a missionary in India (1860–1908), translated 'Jesus loves me' into the Telegu language. He tells this story:

As I was going through the narrow streets of the town on horseback, I heard singing that sounded familiar coming from a side street. I stopped to listen, cautiously drawing up to the corner. There, unobserved, I could look down the street and see and hear. There was a little boy from our school, with men and women standing around him, singing away at the top of his voice, 'Jesus loves me, this I know...'

As he completed the verse someone asked, 'Lad, where did you learn that song?'

'Over at the Missionary School,' was the answer.

'Who is that Jesus, and what is the Bible?'

'Oh! the Bible is the book from God, they say, to teach us how to get to heaven, and Jesus is the name of the divine Redeemer that came into the world to save us from our sins. That is what the missionaries say.'

'Well, it's a nice song. Come, sing us some more.'

And so the little boy went on—a heathen himself, and singing to the heathen about Jesus and his love. 'That is preaching the Gospel by proxy,' I said to myself, as I turned my pony and rode away, well satisfied to leave my little proxy to tell his interested audience all he himself knew, and sing to them over and over that sweet song of salvation.

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WHEN MAO TSE TUNG founded the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Christian church was severely persecuted, with little information coming to the outside world. In 1972 some Americans received an unusual message from China — that the 'This I know' people were well! The Chinese authorities thought the message nonsensical, so they let it through. The Americans clearly understood the reference to Anna Warner's simple hymn — Jesus Loves Me.

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ORIGINS OF THE SONG (from John Mark Ministries web site)

'Jesus Loves Me' began life not as a song but as a part of one of the 1860's best-selling novels.

Anna Warner lived with her father and sister. They lived near the United States Military Academy at West Point. From her front porch she constantly heard the rumors of war. Every Sunday Anna taught Bible classes to the cadets. She realized that if the southern states made good on their threat to withdraw from the Union many of the boys she knew could be killed or wounded in the war that would follow. While it broke her heart to consider the fate of the cadets, she also knew the importance of leading each of them to Jesus now.



Besides her teaching, the forty-year-old Anna also wrote novels with her sister Susan, using the pseudonym Amy Lothrop. In 1860 the sisters' *Say and Seal* was a best seller. The book would quickly pass from the public's fancy. Yet, thanks to one very

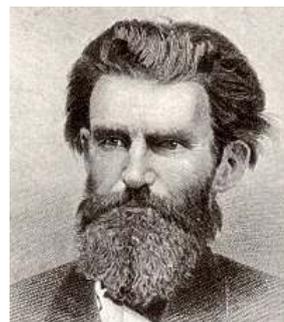
special scene on one single page, the essence of the book and of Anna's faith would live for decades after *Say and Seal* and Anna herself had been forgotten.

In that scene a child lay dying. Nothing could be done to ease his pain or give him a second chance at life. As his ultimate fate grew nearer, the novel's focal character, Mr. Linden, attempted to comfort the small boy. Looking into the child's eyes, he slowly recited a poem that began, 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so'.

The words of the poem made the boy's last moments of life much easier. Composed straight from Anna's faithful heart, 'Jesus Loves Me' quickly became one of the most loved poems of the era. No one can even begin to calculate how many times it was said on the battlefield, in the homes of children whose fathers were engaged in the Civil War, from pulpits and in Sunday school classes, and even at the White House itself.

One of the readers who memorized the poem was William Bradbury. A noted musician and teacher of voice and organ, Bradbury also set his faith to music by composing his own songs.

Bradbury added a melody to Anna Warner's poem. A lover of children's voices, as well as a proponent of music education in both school and church, Bradbury allowed the child in his own heart to spring forth when writing the simple tune. Then, to complete the work, he added the chorus: 'Yes, Jesus loves me, Yes, Jesus loves me, Yes, Jesus loves me, The Bible tells me so.' The combination of Warner's words and Bradbury's music was one of the most beautiful gospel efforts of all time.



Through Bradbury's music publishing and distribution network the new children's song quickly worked its way across the North and South. In the face of the most horrible fighting the nation had ever known, both sides were singing about a Savior who died, yet had risen and still watched over everyone with equal love and compassion. It was an ironic message for a very ironic time.

THE SCHOOL CASE – SERVICE OUTLINE

Use this outline in planning your service and insert your own notes

OR

Use an outline of your regular order of worship and insert elements from **THE SCHOOL CASE**

1. ARRIVAL _____

2. WELCOME _____

3. SONG _____

4. INVOCATION _____

5. BIBLE READINGS _____

6. SONG _____

7. DRAMA _____

8. SONG _____

9. BLESSING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN _____

10. SONG _____

11. SERMON _____

12. CONFESSION / ABSOLUTION _____

13. OFFERING _____

14. SONG _____

15. ANNOUNCEMENTS _____

16. GENERAL PRAYERS / THE LORD'S PRAYER _____

17. BLESSING _____

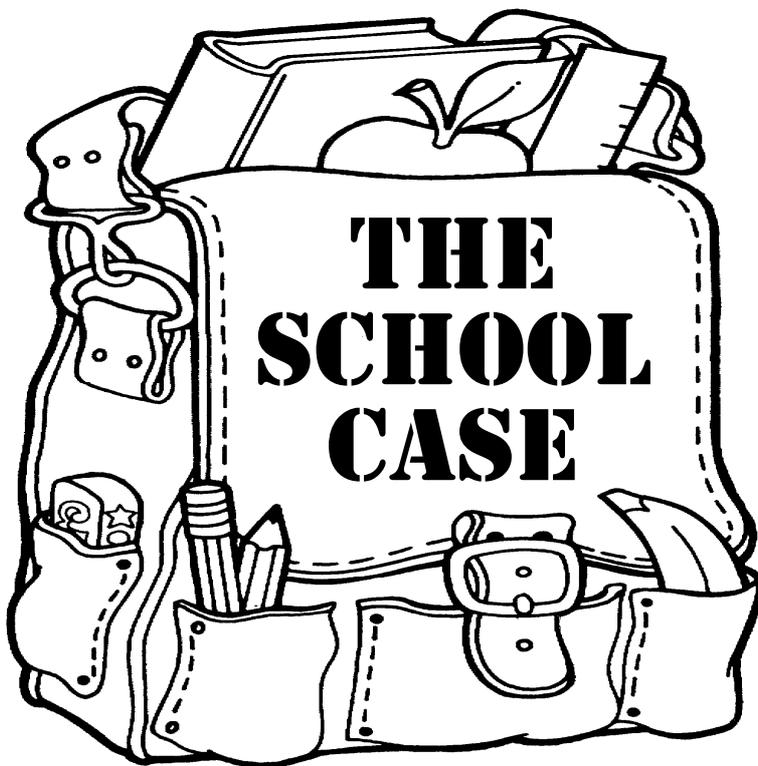
18. SONG _____

19. LEAVING _____

20. COMMUNITY CELEBRATION _____

THE SCHOOL CASE – SERVICE SCRIPT

(Spoken 'script' is in plain type. Comments and instructions are in italic.)



1. ARRIVAL

Greeters greet each person as they arrive: 'Welcome to this special service'. They give people any papers or books they will need for the service, help them find suitable seats and give any information needed to follow the service comfortably.

CLOWNS can be greeters, especially for primary-aged school children.

As people arrive, **musicians** play an instrumental 'variations on the 'Jesus loves me' theme'. Alternatively play a recording of the song or project the music and images on a screen.

2. WELCOME

Project the school case logo on the screen.

WORSHIP LEADER: Good morning.

It's just [number] sleeps 'til a really big day for some of you — the day the school year starts.

Put your hands up if you will be going to school this week.

Wow! It's great that you have chosen to worship here with us at this busy and important time of your life.

We're having a special service today to celebrate the start of your school year. It's so special, we've given it a name: 'The School Case'.

Take a minute to shake hands with someone, sitting near you, say g'day and tell them why you think this service is called 'The School Case'.

Allow time.

CLOWNS (with backpack or other school cases) circulate, say 'g'day' and suggest that the service is called 'The School Case' because they are carrying school cases.

3. SONG

WL: While you're standing, let's sing.

MUSIC LEADER introduces the song and suggests that people can sing along and/or follow the clown's actions, or simply listen.

CONGREGATION sings a song about Jesus' love, eg Your love is higher than the mountains (Bullock)

A **CLOWN** leads actions to the song.

4. INVOCATION

WL & CLOWN Demonstrate a handshake, eg. G'day. My name is Johnathan Livingston Klaugn. But, since we're friends, you can call me 'JL.'

WL: When we worship, it's like God puts out his hand to welcome us with a handshake because God loves us and wants to spend time with us.

God says, 'My name is Almighty Creator, Sustainer, Saviour, Redeemer, Comforter, Enabler . . . and more. But, since we're friends, you can call me "Father" and you can call me "Jesus"'.

We shake God's hand and spend this worship time with him.

Can you pretend to reach up and shake God's hand and say 'G'day, Jesus. I'm glad to be here with you'.

WL & CLOWNS demonstrate.

5. BIBLE READINGS

Project the words of the verses on screen as they are read.

READER shows a large Bible with bookmarks at the following passages.

The Bible is God's special book. Here's something God says to us in the Bible —

READER opens the Bible to the first passage, shows where they are reading from and reads:

1. (Jeremiah 31:3) God says: I love you people with a love that will last forever. That is why I have continued showing you kindness.

Four different readers can each read one of the following passages in the same way.

2. (Nehemiah 9:17)
But you are a forgiving God.
You are kind and full of mercy.
You do not become angry quickly, and you have great love.
3. (Psalm 23:6)
God's kindness and love
will always be with me.
4. (Psalm 136.2)
Give thanks to the God of gods;
His love continues forever.
5. (2 Thessalonians 2:16) God loved us, and through his grace he gave us a good hope and encouragement that continues forever.

READER: It sounds to me as if God is saying the same thing over and over again. God must really want us to know that God loves us.

WL: Say that with me, will you: 'God loves us.'

Takes the Bible from the Reader.

In fact, people have called this whole book 'God's Love Story' or 'God's love letter to us'. That's pretty amazing, isn't it.

A CLOWN can take the Bible from the Worship Leader, dance around with it a bit, and put it on the lectern or on the altar where it can be seen throughout the rest of the service.

6. SONG

MUSIC LEADER introduces the song.

CONGREGATION sings a song about Jesus' love, eg Jesus' love is very wonderful.

A **CLOWN** leads clapping to the song.

7. DRAMA: THE SCHOOL CASE

Set up the table and chair for the drama during the previous song. Go directly into the drama (page 17) without introduction.

8. SONG

MUSIC LEADER introduces the song.

CONGREGATION sings 'Jesus Loves Me'.

A **CLOWN** leads actions for the song.

9. BLESSING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

WL: 'Jesus loves you.' That's the very most important thing to take with you to school — or anywhere you go. But you can't really see Jesus. You can't actually put Jesus in your school case when you go off to school. You can take Jesus with you in your heart and in your head.

We want to do something to help you remember that Jesus really does love you.

Children starting school for the first time

WL: Will all the children here who are starting school for the very first time this year, please come to the front with the grown-ups who are here with you.

Children and Parents come to the front.

WL: The first thing we're going to do is bless you.

Parents — aunts, uncles, grandparents, godparents and friends — will you please put your hands on your child's shoulders or head and repeat after me.

Dear [name of child]

I pray that as you start school this year

Jesus will live in your heart by faith

and that your life will be strong in love

and be built on love.

Amen.

Thanks, parents. You can give them a hug now, if you want to.

Boys and girls, as you go back to your seats, a **CLOWN** will give you something that you can put in your school case to remind you that Jesus loves you.

CLOWNS give 'Jesus loves me' mementoes to children.

Other school children

WL invites students who are returning to school this year to come forward with their parents.

Include secondary (and tertiary) students, if they are willing to participate. If it will be a very large group, this can be done with the people standing at their places.

We're going to pray for you, too. Parents — aunts, uncles, grandparents, godparents and friends — please put your hands on your child's shoulders or head and repeat after me.

Dear [name of student]
As you return to school this year
I pray that you will have the power
to understand the greatness of Jesus' love —
how wide and how long
and how high and how deep
that love is.
Then you can be filled
with the fullness of God.
Amen.

Thanks, parents. You can give them a hug now, if you want to.

Students, as you go back to your seats, a CLOWN will give you something that you can put in your school case to remind you that Jesus loves you.

CLOWNS give 'Jesus loves me' mementoes to children.

10. SINGING

MUSIC LEADER introduces the song.

CONGREGATION sings a song about Jesus' love, eg Power of your love (Bullock)

A **CLOWN** can lead actions for the song.

11. SERMON:

THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S LOVE

TEXT: Ephesians 3:17,18

I pray that Christ will live in your hearts by faith and that your life will be strong in love and be built on love.

And I pray that you and all God's holy people will have the power to understand the greatness of Christ's love — how wide and how long and how high and how deep that love is.

Christ's love is greater than anyone can ever know, but I pray that you will be able to know that love. Then you can be filled with the fullness of God.

In the sermon explore the text that was the blessing prayer for the children.

As you consider 'how wide and deep . . .' use a simple clown sketch.

How much Jesus loves you?

Clowns start with hands about 10 cm apart.
Does Jesus love you this much?
More than that.

Move hands wider apart.
Does Jesus love you this much?
More than that.

Move hands wider apart.
Does Jesus love you this much?
More than that.

Stretch out hands as far as possible to the sides.
Jesus loves you this much!

Direct people's attention to a crucifix or cross.

Jesus stretched out his hands like that to show how much he loves us.

—
Include in the sermon an interview with someone who has a special story to tell about the impact of Jesus' love in their life.

12. CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

The worship leader can lead all of the confessional prayer or different people can lead each section.

WL: Let's talk to Jesus now.

Put your hands on your ears:
Dear Jesus, we like to hear it over and over that you love us. You want us to love you back and to love other people.

Put your hands on your head:
Dear Jesus, sometimes the words that we hear about your love don't get to our heads and we think unloving things about people.

Put your hands on your heart:
Dear Jesus, sometimes the words we hear about your love don't get to our hearts, and we have unloving feelings towards people.

Hold up your hands.
Dear Jesus, sometimes our hands don't get the message about your love and we do things that hurt people.

Fold your hands.
Forgive us for the times when with our heads, our hearts and our hands we ignore your love and forget to act as people who are loved by you. Help us go into this new school year free from any hurts and problems left over from last year. Amen.

MINISTER: When Jesus stretched out his hands to show how much he loved you, he took away every single one of your unloving thoughts and feelings and actions.

Jesus never stops loving you and helping you to love others. Amen.

13. OFFERING

WL: We know that God loves us. We'll show that we love him back in two ways:

- we'll have a money offering to help with the work of helping people that God does through this church
- and we'll sing a song, promising to trust and follow him with our whole lives.

14. SONG

While the offering is collected . . .

MUSIC LEADER introduces the song.

CONGREGATION sings a song with our response to Jesus' love, eg the 'I love Jesus' verse of 'Jesus loves me'. See page 7.

A **CLOWN** leads actions to the verse.

15. ANNOUNCEMENTS

WL makes any necessary brief announcements. Include:

- Information about any parenting courses you will be running in the near future.
- Information about any services/programs you offer for children.
- Arrangements for the community tea or lunch that follows the service.

SIGNING JESUS LOVES YOU

WL: A wonderful thing parents can do for school children (and school children can do for their parents) is to remind them that Jesus loves them.

Here's a neat, secret way to do that.

When your child leaves your home or your car on the way to school, get their attention by calling their name. Then give them the secret 'Jesus loves you!' sign in Auslan*.

CLOWNS demonstrate:

Jesus — point to the palm of each hand, identifying the nails that demonstrated how much Jesus loves us.

loves — put both hands over your heart and make a pumping motion.

you — point to the person.

* You can access a huge 'dictionary' of Auslan (Australian Sign Language) signs at www.auslan.org.au

Invite people to have a practice.

WL: Encourage families to form the habit of doing it every day.

16. GENERAL PRAYERS & THE LORD'S PRAYER

WL (or a prayer leader) leads prayers for other people whom God loves.

CONGREGATION prays the prayer Jesus taught us to say to God, who loves us more than the best Father you can imagine.

17. CONCLUSION & BLESSING

WL: Our School Case worship service is coming to a close. Hands up if you have figured out why we called it 'The School Case'.

Ask a few people to give their thoughts. And affirm their answers.

WL: God bless you and take care of you. God smile his love on you wherever you go.

After the spoken blessing:

WL: And remember . . . sign Jesus loves you!

18. CLOSING SONG

MUSIC LEADER introduces the song.

CONGREGATION sings a song about Jesus' love, eg Remember God's love (Good times bad times) David McGregor

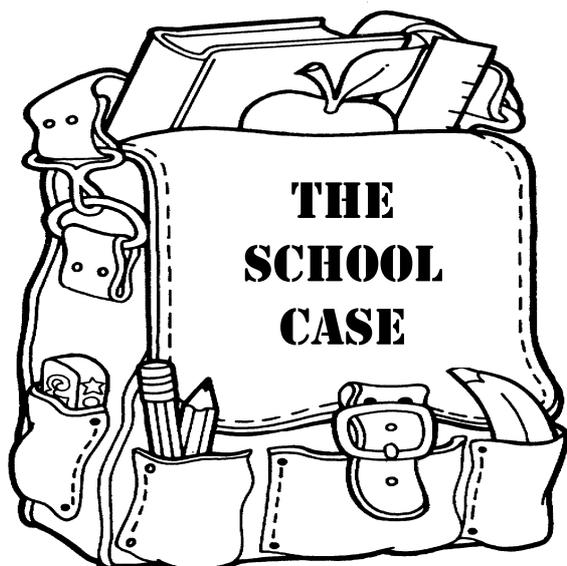
A **CLOWN** can lead some dancing to the song.

19. LEAVING

As people leave, **CLOWNS** can sign 'Jesus loves you' to each person.

20. COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

THE SCHOOL CASE A DETECTIVE DRAMA



This drama can be performed in a number of different ways

- as a play with humans (the detectives) plus 'things' (the witnesses).
- as a play with all human characters, some of them representing 'things'.
- as a puppet sketch.

Use the script as a starting point and improvise your own drama.

Characters:

The police: They can be modeled on characters from a favourite TV Detective show.

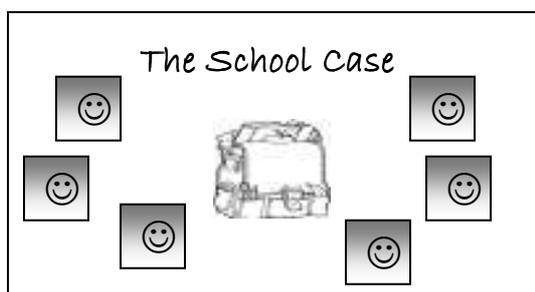
- The 'Chief' Inspector
- Detective 1 and Detective 2

The suspects: They can be dressed as the thing they represent, or be humans, carrying the thing they represent.

- Lunch (L) — sandwich
- Diary/schedule (D) — diary
- Hat (H) — hat

Optional extra characters:

- Recess (R) — banana or orange
- Pencil case (P) — pencil or pencil case
- Mobile phone (M) — phone
- Comb (C) — comb or brush
- Identification (I) — identification label



Props:

- The detectives' status board whiteboard: with the heading 'The School Case' Draw a school case/ backpack in the centre and pictures (photos) of the 'suspects' around the edges. If your worship area is so large that the whiteboard can't be seen, use an overhead or digital projector.
- Whiteboard markers
- A clipboard or note pad that Detective 2 carries and refers to continually.

Scene:

A police detective room. There is a plain table with a chair on either side. A whiteboard stands behind the table. Leave as much space as possible for moving around the table.

A rowdy crowd of 'suspects' is milling around in the detective room, each one shouting their theme cry and arguing with the others — stop short of actual physical fights.

Improvise, using dialogue like the following:

Lunch (L): A good healthy lunch is the most important thing . . . Be sure to have food from the main food groups. . . Fruit and vegetables. . . Wholegrain bread. . . Easy on the empty calories.

Diary (D): You need a diary or you won't know what's going on. . . The diary is the way your parents and teachers communicate. . . It's absolutely vital.

Hat (H): Be sun-smart. . . . Take a hat. . . Remember, no hat no play.

Little Lunch/Recess (R): You won't get through the morning without a recess pick-me-up. . . Grab a banana. . . . Wear an orange smile.

Identification (I): Make sure your property is properly identified . . . Don't let your stuff get lost. . . It looks like everyone else's.

Chief enters: Can we have a little shush here.

Detective 1 (D1) follows him and shouts a bit louder: He said, 'can we have a little shush'.

Detective 2 (D2) follows them and whistles shrilly.

Everyone is instantly quiet.

Chief and D1 look at D2, questioningly.

D2 just shrugs.

Chief: Alright. Now that we have your attention. Everyone will get a chance. We'll talk to you one at a time so you can each state your case. In the mean time, sit down over there.

Suspects move to seats in the front row of the worship area.

Chief and **D1** stand together on the other side of the stage.

Chief agitated: It happens every year . . .

D1: . . . just when school starts.

D2 is busy arranging chairs, dusting the table and or adjusting the whiteboard.

Chief: The same old thing.

D1 echoing: Same old, same old.

D2: Writes and/or points to the title 'The School Case' on the whiteboard.

Chief: The school case. When everyone and his brother thinks they are the very most important thing for kids to take to school.

D1: They think they're really important.

Chief: I just said that.

D2: Yes, you did, Chief. You just said that.

Chief: What are we going to do about it?

D2 goes to the group of suspects. Lunch, come up here, please.

Chief: We'd better start interviewing suspects.

D1: Good idea, Chief.

Chief notices Lunch coming forward.

Chief: Oh good, Lunch. Have a seat.

Of course, if Lunch and the other suspects are dressed as sandwiches or diaries and can't sit, they stand by the interview table.

Lunch sits on the chair at one side of the table, the **Chief** sits on the other side. **D1** hovers behind the chief. **D2** returns to the whiteboard.

Chief: Well, Lunch. We brought you here because of . . .

D1: . . . because of this awful disagreement that comes up every year.

Chief: Yes. About what's the most important thing for kids to take to school.

Lunch: I should think that is obvious. The most important thing for kids to take is lunch.

Chief tries to interrupt at the end of each statement, but Lunch keeps going non-stop.

As lunch is speaking, **D2** draws a line from 'Lunch' photo to the school case, and writes on the line 'MOST IMPORTANT?'.

Lunch: Every child needs a good nutritious meal in the middle of the day. They need something from every food group. Nutritionists will tell you that they need lots of good things from the bottom of the food pyramid (fruit and vegetables) some things from the next level (grains and cereals). All the way up to the top — the snacks that they should avoid all together at lunch time or have in very small portions.

Chief finally getting a word in: Thank you. We've heard all that before. Do you have anything new to add?

Lunch: I could show you ads from this week's newspaper showing that a healthy lunch doesn't need to be expensive.

Chief: Enough!

D1: Yes, you can go.

Lunch: But . . .

Chief: We'll let you know when we solve the case.

Chief gets up and turns to **D1:** You don't have to repeat everything I say.

D1: Why, Chief, I would never repeat everything you say.

Chief and D1: continue along those lines.

While they are arguing **D2** ushers Lunch back to the seats and brings **Diary** to the chair where Lunch had been sitting.

Chief: . . . I think we need to call our next witness.

D1: Our next witness is . . . Walks to the group of witnesses, checks his clipboard, and calls 'Diary'.

D2 standing behind **Diary's** chair: Right here, mate. Returns to the whiteboard.

Chief: So I see. Alright, 'Diary' is it?

Diary nods.

Chief seated: What's your story?

Diary speaking very precisely: A school diary is the essential piece of equipment for every school child. The diary tells them where to go and when to go there. The diary is a record of everything that happens.

As **Diary** is speaking, **D2** draws a line from the **Diary** picture to the schoolcase and writes 'Most important?'

Chief: I see.

D1: He sees.

Chief turns and glares at D1.

Diary: The diary is also the way teachers communicate with parents and parents communicate with teachers. So you can see how very essential a diary can be.

Chief: Thank you.

D1: Yes, thanks. That will be all.

Chief: We'll contact you when we solve the case.

Chief to D1: Will you please stop . . .

D1: . . . finishing your sentences?

Chief and D1 continue along those lines.

While they are arguing, **D2** ushers **Diary** out and **Hat** to the chair where **Diary** had been sitting.

Chief: Call our next suspect in.

D1 walks to the group of suspects, checks his clipboard and calls: 'Hat'.

D2: Right here, mate. Returns to the whiteboard.

Chief: Right. You're Hat?

Hat nods.

Chief taking his seat: What's your story?

Hat: Yeah, Man. Ya gotta have a hat — a desert cap or broad brim. It's the sun. Ya know what I mean. That Aussie sun can fry ya if ya got no hat. Ya gotta have a hat.

As **Hat** is speaking, **D2** draws 'a line from the hat picture to the schoolcase and writes 'MOST IMPORTANT?'

Chief: I see.

D1: He sees.

Chief turns and glares at D1.

Hat: They got rules, ya know. No hat, no play. It's the law man. Ya gotta have a hat.

Chief: Whoa. We get your point.

D1: We get it.

Hat: Like, ya gotta have a hat.

Chief: You can go now.

Insert this same interview pattern for any of the other suspects you choose.
And/or continue . . .

D2 ushers **Hat** back to the waiting group.

Chief to D1: Who else have we got?

D1 consulting his clipboard: Just the usual suspects:

Use the following format for any suspects who have not made their case:

D1 after consulting clipboard: Little Lunch.

D2 points to the character and they stand.

Chief: As usual! OR Again! OR Of course! OR Why do they keep trying?

D2 motions for the character to sit.

Chief: And . . .

D1 after consulting clipboard: That's all.

D2: Sorry Chief. He's not here.

Chief shaking his head: They're all important.

D2: But not THE MOST important.

Chief: That's right.

D2 goes to to the group: You're all important, but not THE MOST important.

Suspects begin arguing again: speaking all at once: But, they can't get along without lunch. A hat is important. Surely not more important than . . .

Chief shouts: QUIET!

There is silence.

Chief: One more outburst like that and you're all out of here.

Chief to D1: What have we got?

D1 referring to status board: Well, there's Lunch. Important, yes. But MOST IMPORTANT? No.

Chief: Take it off.

D1 removes picture of Lunch.

D2: What about **Diary**? Important, but not MOST IMPORTANT. Right, Chief.

Chief: Right. Take it off!

D1 removes picture of **Diary**, and goes to the **Hat** picture: Hat's important, but. . .

Chief: not the MOST IMPORTANT. Take it off

Continue this way through the other photos.

Chief begins to pace, back and forth across the stage. **D1** follows him. At each turn, they speak one line of dialogue. **D2** stays at the whiteboard.

Chief: HE isn't here.

D1: Why isn't HE here?

Chief: How should I know?

D1: You're the chief.

Chief: All these other suspects show up.

D1: They're important, alright.

Chief: Very important, but

D1: . . . not THE MOST important.

D2: He IS here.

Chief: What?

D1: What are you on about?

D2: He IS here.
Chief: Where?
D2: He's everywhere that people remember him and look for him.
D1: We can't see him.
D2: No, you can't see him.
Chief: That's what we said.
D2: You can't really see him, and you can't stuff him in a school case. But he is here.
Chief: Now you've lost me.
D1: And me.
D2: Ok. Look at this. *He writes on the whiteboard: Jesus.*
Chief: The very most important thing for kids to take to school is . . .
D1: . . . Jesus?
Chief: You've got it! And the reason Jesus is the most important thing for kids to take to school is . . .
D1: . . .because he is strong when they are weak.
Chief: It's really important to have someone strong with you when you need help. And . . .
D2: Because Jesus loves them.
Chief: That's it. That's the very most important thing to take to school — someone who loves you.

D1: All the time.
D2: No matter what.
Chief: Wait a minute. We need evidence. All those suspects had 'facts' to present. How do we know that Jesus loves them.
D1: That's easy, Chief. It's all in the book.
D2: The Bible tells us so.
Chief: That's it then. Case closed. Go tell the other suspects.
D1 goes to where the other suspects are seated. We've solved the case.
The very most important thing for kids to take to school is — Jesus.
Lunch: Yeah. We should have known. 'Jesus loves them'.
Diary: The Bible tells us so.
Lunch: All the kids belong to him.
Hat: They are weak but he is strong.
D1: Yes, Jesus loves them.
D2: Yes, Jesus loves them.
Chief: The Bible tells us so. That's it. Case closed.
Chief and Detectives exit.