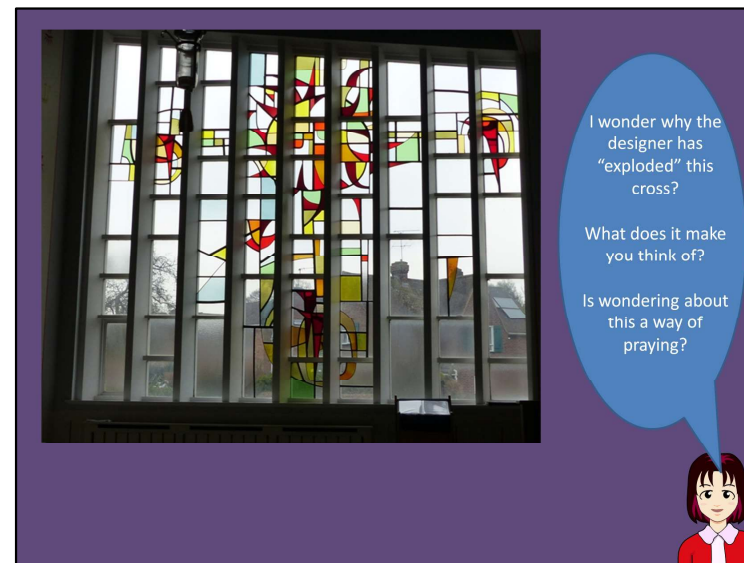




Stained glass windows are found in many churches and Cathedrals and have a rich symbolic meaning as well as being good to look at. Excellent examples are found in the St Edmundsbury Cathedral in Bury St Edmunds where they tell the story of the Old and New Testament and there is a creation window too.

Stained glass windows were originally to help people who were illiterate to access stories from the Bible and to understand the services which were in Latin. Looking at and studying the windows can be an aid to prayer for some Christians who can use the stories and people represented in the windows to meditate on aspects of their own lives. It is important to emphasise that the windows are not worshipped or prayed to but can be helpful for prayer.



This is a stained glass window at the Church of the Ascension with All Saints in Chelmsford. It is a modern representation of the cross and deliberately fragmented. This could be interpreted as the fragmentation of world or the suffering that Jesus went through on the cross.

A Christian may use this to think about the suffering of Jesus on the cross or the state of the world today or even their own sufferings.

Ask the children what meaning this may have for them and what meaning it may have for Christians. There are no right or wrong answers here – it is a matter of interpretation.



What is Moses receiving from God?
Can this image help Christians to pray?



Photo used with kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of St Edmundsbury Cathedral

In this stained glass window from St Edmundsbury Cathedral in Bury St Edmunds Moses is receiving the 10 commandments from God on stone tablets. The numerals show the numbers of the commandments. Moses has a halo round his head to show he is holy. There is lots of light coming from where God's hands are to show that he is both holy and the light of the world.

A Christian might use this to help them pray by meditation on the story of Moses receiving the commandments or on the commandments themselves. The symbol of light might help a Christian to think about God as the light in the world. Some Christians might imagine themselves as the kneeling figure of Moses in the window and how they may feel or what message this may have for them.

The ten commandments are rules that God gave to Moses for living a good life and they are the rules by which Christians continue to try to live. (Exodus Ch 20 vv 1- 17)
They are:

1. There is only one God.
2. You shall not make idols (idols are images or statues which are worshipped instead of God. These are different from icons or statues which are used as aids to prayer)
3. You shall not use God as a swear word.
4. Keep the Sabbath Day holy (originally Saturday but now Sunday).
5. Honour your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not lie about someone else.
10. You shall not covet other people's possessions (covet means "to want or long for").



I know this is Jesus washing
his disciples' feet.

I wonder what meaning this
could have for a Christian?

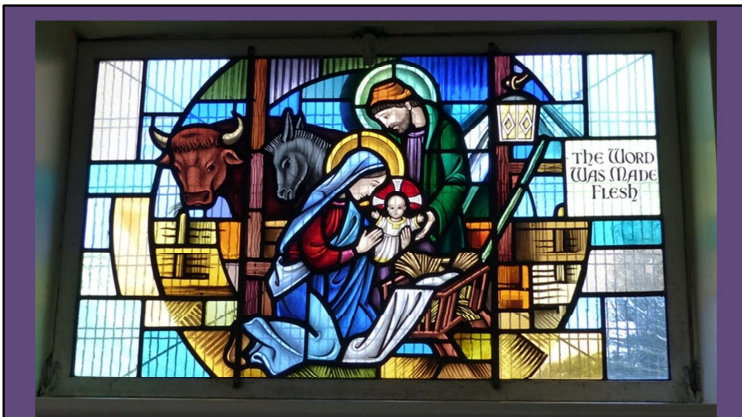
Could thinking about this be
a way of praying?



Photo used with kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of St Edmundsbury Cathedral

Jesus washed his disciples' (followers') feet to show service to others and humility. (John ch 13 vv 1 – 17)

Thinking about the meaning of the story could be a way for a Christian to pray.
Meditating on stories from the Gospels and the messages in them can be a way to think about how this relates to your own life.



Stained glass windows can be used to tell stories. They can help Christians to think about a part of the Bible and to meditate on it. This can be a type of prayer.

Which story does this window tell? How could it help a Christian to pray?

This is the story of Christmas where Jesus was born in a stable. The picture shows the animals traditionally in the stable and the manger, or food trough, where Jesus was traditionally put to sleep. (Luke 2:1-20)

This could be used to help someone to pray by thinking about the miracle of Jesus' birth and meditating on the story of Christmas and how this may relate to them.

The words "The Word was Made Flesh" relates to God's word (promise) being made into human form through the birth of his son, Jesus.



Time to Think

Look at the stained glass window.

This about what the picture means to you.

Can you link this to prayer?

Photo used with kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of St Edmundsbury Cathedral

This is a detail from the Creation window at St Edmundsbury Cathedral. It was chosen for this Time to Think as it is accessible to children of all or no faith on some level.

In a Christian faith school, this could be linked to the Creation story and what the creation has to say to young Christians.

In other schools, wondering about how animals came to be created or the beauty of nature could be an approach.

Allow the children time to study the picture and to think about what it could mean to them.

(Genesis ch 1)