

# Welcome



Welcome to the fourth official United Reformed Church (URC) Children's and Youth Work (CYW) Holiday Club – *Sparks and Stories*. Tying in with our theme for the year, Story Story Story, we gather round the campfire to share some of the stories Jesus told, the stories of his life, and how our story fits into God's big story.

This material is not designed to be prescriptive, although you may use it that way if you wish. Nor is it designed to be exclusive; feel free to swap and change the ideas included here for ones you think more suitable for your groups. It is written as a five-day plan, but you may decide to do a one-day extravaganza, a club once a week through the holidays, or maybe just select a couple of the sessions to do on two or three days in the week.

At the back of this resource you will find several appendices. You may be thinking of adapting this material in a variety of ways and the appendices will give you suggestions and ideas of how to do so for various settings.

As always, we would really love some feedback. Do let us know what you found helpful and if there is anything else you wish we had included. Should we do another such resource next year, what would be most helpful to you? And do let us know how you use it – some pictures for our Facebook page would be greatly appreciated. Contact [lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk](mailto:lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk) or [children.youth@urc.org.uk](mailto:children.youth@urc.org.uk).

## Credits:

Main writing team: The Revd Chris Dowd, Nicola Grieves, Judy Harris, Sharon Lloyd, Hannah Middleton, Jess Poole, Lorraine Webb, Jo West, Ruth White

Appendices: The Revd Carole Marsden, Judy Harris, Sharon Lloyd, Sam Richards, Leo Roberts

Songs: Leo Roberts (music and lyrics) and Roo Stewart (score)

Proofreading: Laurence Wareing and Heather Wilkinson

Graphics: Laura Taylor

Scriptures quoted from the International Children's Bible,<sup>®</sup> Copyright ©1986, 1988, 1999, 2015 by Tommy Nelson. Used by permission.

## Previous materials:

Snapshots: take a stroll through God's photograph album.

Timetravellers: travel back in time to Bible times and find out what the children there might want to send to the future to enrich our faith.

Supersleuths: don your detective outfit and investigate the heroes and villains of the Bible.

# In this resource

## Appendices

**11 to 14s:** While the main resource is written with the five to eleven age range in mind, you may have some young people who are just outside that demographic, or who come as junior helpers. The first appendix gives ideas for extending the material to take them a little deeper.

**Under fives:** You may have some children of pre-school age within your holiday club, so we have added an appendix on how to adapt the theme for little ones, including some age-specific and more sensory activities you might introduce.

**Vintage:** Perhaps you are running a vintage holiday club and want the theme to tie in, so there is an appendix of ideas for the elderly and for those with dementia. This theme is an excellent one to develop with elderly people as you share stories of their lives together.

**Intergenerational:** Why not develop the holiday club as an intergenerational adventure, inviting adults and young people as well as children to participate together? There is an appendix with some ideas for running an intergenerational event, which may help in adapting these materials.

## Overarching themes and activities

In the first section of this resource, there are some overarching themes and activities. Here are some ideas for decorating your hall and for ongoing/cumulative activities for your groups of children and adults. There are also the three songs which have been purpose-written for this material by Leo Roberts.

## Reflections for volunteers

It is important for the volunteers running the holiday club to ground it in faith and sound theology and to know where the theme is taking them. For this reason, we have included some initial reflections for the team to include in a daily pre-session briefing, with discussion points to stimulate their own thinking and learning. Obviously, you will also want a prayer time together, maybe focusing on your thinking and the session ahead.

## Arrival activities

You will need something to keep the children occupied from the moment they arrive until the holiday club session actually begins. These activities usually take place in the team areas and are to encourage children to feel welcome, engaged and to start them thinking about the theme from the very moment they step over the threshold. They will be able to work on their own photograph album as well as doing a challenge and creative activity, engaging all learning styles.

## Story

We have chosen to deliver the stories in a variety of styles and encourage you to be experimental with different ways of presenting Bible stories. For those of you not confident with storytelling or drama, or for those of you running your holiday club over Zoom, there are videos of the stories being told by our team on our YouTube playlist: [bit.ly/SparksHCPlaylist](https://bit.ly/SparksHCPlaylist)

There are also suggestions for YouTube videos you may wish to use to retell the story later in the session. These are chosen because they tell the story in a way suitable for this age range and are true to the Bible accounts.

## Crafts

These crafts are not prescriptive – you may substitute them with crafts of your own.

We recommend checking Pinterest for ideas or referring to past issues of Families on Faith Adventures @ Home [bit.ly/fofaadventuresathome](https://bit.ly/fofaadventuresathome) And Faith Adventures: Children Together [bit.ly/FACT\\_resource](https://bit.ly/FACT_resource) to stimulate your creative juices.

Do try to use recyclable or eco-friendly materials wherever possible. Craft time is a good time to talk – maybe use the reflective (wondering) questions to prompt a conversation while you are engaging in the craft together or ponder on what you have found out so far. We have included a variety of crafts and science experiments – you will probably want to choose one or maybe two, depending on your group and circumstances.

## Games

Two games are described here for each session and these will each have a link to the theme. You will undoubtedly want to include more games – probably some of the children's favourites.

## Small group prayer activity

This is an opportunity for the small groups to pray together and to encourage a bit of creativity in prayer. Prayer during this time can be far more personal and encourage children and adults alike to build their personal relationship with God. Remember to allow time to listen and be still.

## Recipes

Here are suggested recipes and food activities that are themed to our days and are quick and easy for children to make themselves during the session if you choose. If you are using them, it would be helpful to consider also serving fruit and a healthy drink. Alternative suggestions to cater for those with allergies are included in brackets in the ingredients list.

## Song

You will want to include songs as you gather the group to begin and also in your closing worship time, probably throughout the session too. One of our songs is linked to each of the days' themes and is called God's story – Our Story. You could sing just one verse each session or could build up by adding a verse on each time. Then there are two more general and much shorter songs, Story, Story, Story (which also links to our general theme for the year in Children's and Youth Work) and Sparks. You could easily devise some actions or movements to go along with these songs. Your church probably has additional songs which your children will enjoy – think about the lyrics and make sure they are age-appropriate and theologically sound.

This year we have included a campfire song for each session, sung to a well-known tune.

## Closing prayer

The closing prayers are designed to be a little more active and for everyone to get involved in them. Remember that prayer is for adults as well as children – this is not a time for the adults to go off and start tidying up! You might even want to encourage parents and carers to arrive slightly before the end of the session and join in the closing prayer with their children.

## Bible version

For the purpose of this resource, we have used the International Children's Bible. Please make sure that you credit them using the wording on the first page of this resource if you copy the text, and please ensure that you do not change the text in any way. Obviously you may choose to use the

Bible preferred by your church family, but please ensure that it uses language which is accessible and inclusive, while remaining a true translation.

### A typical holiday club might run like this:

Suggestions for a daily timetable: 2.5 hours

#### Arrivals

Arrival activities in small groups – daily activity as detailed in that day’s session instructions.

#### Upfront session one (45 minutes)

- Active warm up (music and exercise routine)
- Story about Jesus
- Song
- Game
- Parable
- Campfire song.

#### Small groups (one hour)

- Refreshments – recipe of the day
- Crafts
- Prayer activity.

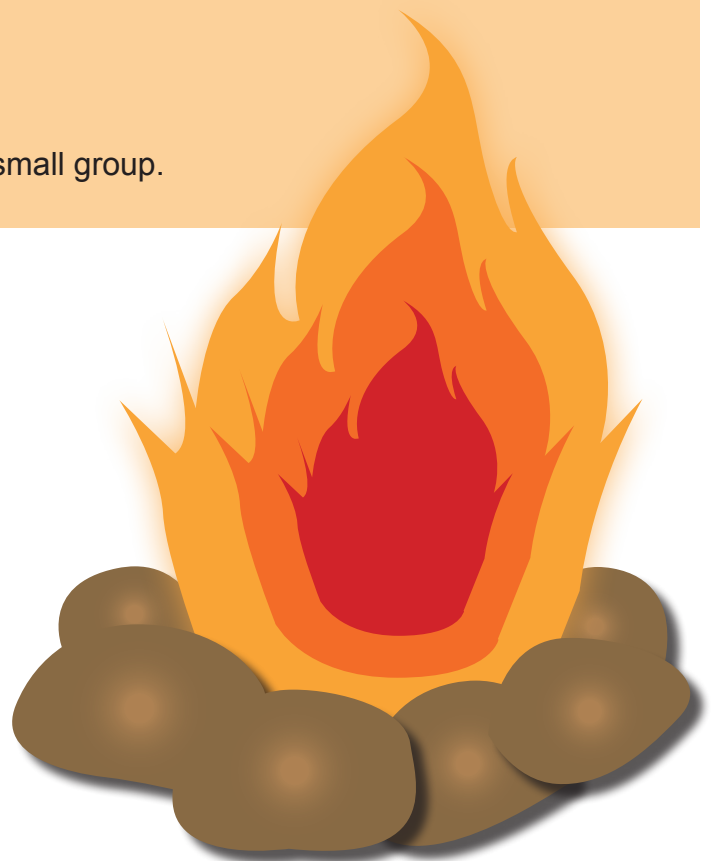
#### Games

#### Upfront session two (30 minutes)

- What have we learned?
- What’s your story?
- Song
- Closing song and group prayer activity.

#### Goodbye

Wind-down and gather up ready for collection from small group.



# Overarching themes and activities for the whole week

## About each session

### Personnel

The leader of the holiday club is a campfire storyteller – could be dressed as an explorer, perhaps, with a rucksack full of props for the various stories in each session. The storyteller could have a catchphrase – ‘Are you seated comfortably, then we’ll begin’ or ‘Hello, campers – hello storyteller’s name’ or whenever the storyteller says the word story, the children all shout ‘Story, story, story!’ or something else, of course.

### Decorate your venue

The scene is set in a campsite around a campfire. You could make the campfire out of logs and tissue paper or could maybe borrow one from a Brownie pack or similar if they have one. Children could sit on cushions or blankets around the campfire. You could use pop up tents as decoration, or tents made with a blanket hung over a rope. You might even create some trees. You might want to have some lanterns hanging around. You will want to have a ‘storytelling chair’ – this could be a special chair if you have access to one, or you could use a camp chair or a pretend log. Consider decorating the chair or getting something that looks the part! Marshmallows on sticks are optional.

### Team identity

It would be fantastic if each team had their own ‘tent’ or den in one area of the hall. You could use boards to designate spaces or mark them out with tape on the floor. If you are unable to create a tent, why not put blankets on the floor and get the team to create a team flag and put that up on a bamboo cane. Each team will want to come up with a team name and maybe a team badge to put on their camp blankets.

This could simply be a circle of card with a safety pin taped onto the back that they design and colour.

### Camp blankets

It would be wonderful if the group could have camp blankets for when they’re gathered round the campfire, but obviously this has cost and resourcing implications. One option might be to get blankets from charity shops or have an appeal in your church for unwanted blankets which could then be cut into four smaller blankets, just big enough to wrap round shoulders or cover knees. Children could be encouraged to bring in an old blanket, or simply to bring a woolly jumper or oodie or something similar to snuggle up in round the campfire (fun to do, even on a hot summer’s day!)



## Ongoing activities

### Arrival activities

Each session will have an arrival activity to keep everybody busy from the moment they arrive at the Holiday Club. Following the camping theme, completion of each activity at the beginning of the session should lead to the awarding of a 'badge' at the end of the session. These badges are provided as a template at the end of this resource. Badges can be printed out and 'awarded' – you might like to glue them onto card and tape a safety pin to the back so that they can be worn the following day or attached to a 'camp blanket', or if your children are likely to have resources at home, could be sent home to do.

### Hotseat

(Optional) Arrange a time for someone from the church congregation to come and visit the holiday club and talk about their own story, particularly their faith story, or to talk about their favourite Bible story and why they chose it.

### A challenge for the end of the session

You may want to set a challenge for the children to do each day for the next session. Here are some examples:

- Ask someone at home what their favourite Bible story is and why
- Find a children's book on your bookshelf, on Youtube or in the library that tells you something about God, Jesus or God's kingdom without mentioning God or Jesus at all. A good example might be Elmer, which tells us that we all belong and all have something to give, regardless of whether we are the same as everyone else or different. This is called a 'modern parable';
- Take a photograph of you reading or telling/listening to a story in an unusual place
- Ask someone you know to tell you the story about how they became a Christian. Choose three words from that story that sum it up
- Find a story in the news about someone doing something good or positive (instead of all the bad news we hear).

You may not have chance every session to hear everyone's contributions, so it is good to find a way that they can put these on display somehow, perhaps on a noticeboard.

### Swap Shop

Continuing the story theme, you might choose to have a book swap shop where children can bring pre-loved books to donate and can choose books to take away with them. You might want to start this off with a few nice books from a charity shop. Make this a free access area that children can use at any time, either to read a book or to borrow or swap a book.

### Continuing craft

Children could use odd moments of time to work on their badges, colouring them in and sticking them together. Teams might like to write their own campfire song that their team performs around the campfire – maybe something funny about the week's adventures.

### What's your story?

In each session there are some 'What's your story?' questions which encourage children to think about their own story and things that they might be willing to share from their own experiences. Towards the end of the day's session, provide opportunity for them to share these either with the whole group or in their small groups together.

# Essential things to think about

## Outdoors

You may have decided to run your holiday club outdoors. While some of this material is suitable for doing outdoors, you will need to enhance it with extra activities more appropriate for taking advantage of the outdoor space. Alternatively, you may have access to a marquee or large gazebo which you could use, or go outside for part of the session if you have the facilities for that. If you are using outside space, you will need to ensure that the area is clean and free from litter and animal faeces before and after your session and you will also need to consider how you will ensure that children do not wander off from the area. You will need to think about safeguarding – how to ensure that no adults who are not on the team engage inappropriately with the children in your care. You will also need to consider issues such as access to toilets and availability of a first aid kit.

## Registration

It is important to keep an accurate register of the children and adults who attend on each day of your holiday club. This information will need to be kept according to your church's data protection and safeguarding policies.

Parents/carers must also fill in a registration/consent form and children should not be accepted into the holiday club without it.

The registration/consent form must include name and date of the event; child's details; details of two emergency contacts; details of any additional needs; any health needs, medication or allergies; acknowledgement of liability; consent for photographs; consent for first aid and emergency treatment; details of who will be collecting the child at the end of the session. Do not include any information which you do not actually need (eg gender).

Ensure that your registration/consent form states where parents/carers can access your data policy and safeguarding policy. These forms must be kept securely and used sensitively. Sample registration forms are available here: [bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork](https://bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork)

## Safeguarding

Make sure you are familiar with your church's safeguarding policy and that volunteers have received training. Everyone over the age of 18 who is taking part in your holiday club must have an enhanced DBS check for the church. Occasional visitors who do not have a DBS certificate must not be left alone with children and the leadership of the club are responsible for ensuring that a leader is with them at all times. See the URC Good Practice 6:

[bit.ly/good-practice-6](https://bit.ly/good-practice-6)

You may find that volunteers have children at the holiday club to whom they are related or have a close bond. They should be encouraged to remember not to treat those children any differently – hugs and kisses, sitting on lap, being alone with a child, these things are fine for at home but not advisable in a church club situation where they may blur the boundaries for others.

## Photographs

One or two people should be identified as designated photographers for the event and should wear a badge identifying them as such. They should use a camera rather than a smartphone where possible to take photographs and should only photograph those children whose parents have given permission. Photographs should not be used on any social media other than the church's or Church House official social media. See the URC Good Practice 6: [bit.ly/good-practice-6](https://bit.ly/good-practice-6). You are, however, encouraged to share any photographs with Church House Children's and Youth Work (with appropriate permissions – see [bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork](https://bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork)) for use on the website, CYW Facebook page and in URC publications.

## Mobile phones

It is good practice that no mobile phones are brought into the holiday club area unless absolutely necessary.

## Risk assessments

It is essential that you do a risk assessment for the venue you are using for your holiday club and also do risk assessments for the activities you will engage in. Your church may have its own policy and template for risk assessments but you may wish to use or adapt the ones available here: [bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork](https://bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork). Risk assessments are useless if just put in a file. Ensure that all your volunteers have read the risk assessment or, better still, discuss it during your pre-session briefings. Please be aware that all risk assessments should be approved by your church leadership team.

## Safety

Check the premises you use are safe, hygienic and suitable for children – think about stacked chairs, flooring, toilets etc.

Children should not be allowed unaccompanied into kitchen areas.

Think about how to make your toilets a safe place without compromising privacy and dignity, so that you know when children have gone to the toilet and how long they have been gone. As far as this is possible, designate separate toilets for adults.

Have a routine for checking throughout the session that children have not gone missing from the group. Have a routine for the end of the session – perhaps tell children that they are superglued to the floor until their parent or carer comes to collect them and then get the parent/carers and child to come together to a leader to be signed out.

Although it is not compulsory to have someone on the team who is a trained first-aider, it is a very good idea. Make sure everyone on the team knows where the first aid box is and nominate someone to ensure that the box is fully stocked. Have a first aid recording sheet or book and keep clear and full records of any injury, however minor, who treated it and what was done. Ensure that the record is dated and signed and take note of anything that needs to be done to minimise the risk of that happening again. See here: [bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork](https://bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork)

## Behaviour

Remember that the children are at a club and it should be fun for everyone. Do not impose rules that are not necessary or enforce participation if the child feels uncomfortable. One member of the team should be the key person to speak to for any issues that arise, and this should be the only team member who liaises directly with parents or carers about behaviour. Remember that the



best way of encouraging appropriate behaviour is to model it and to build positive relationships. You may want to watch the video on strategies to support behaviour that challenges, which was prepared for leaders of the Pilots organisation [https://youtu.be/9XxpvUGVT\\_o](https://youtu.be/9XxpvUGVT_o). It is good to have a behaviour policy which all team members read and which is available for parents. An example can be found at [bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork](https://bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork). You may also want a simple code of conduct which all participants signs (including leaders and volunteers), an example of which can be found at [bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork](https://bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork). It is helpful to have a short and punchy list of around five golden rules, framed positively ('we will' rather than 'we won't') and with visual cues as well as words. This can be put up in each room and referred to whenever necessary.

## Inclusion

All we do in our churches and fellowship should be as inclusive as we possibly can make it. Nobody should be excluded due to their background, ethnicity, physical or learning needs, gender, language, or for any other reason. Children may come with additional needs or English as a second language, they may be refugees or have experienced trauma. Consider what adjustments may need to be made to enable all children to feel welcome and take part. You can find training videos on our YouTube channel which might be useful watch together. Contact [children.youth@urc.org.uk](mailto:children.youth@urc.org.uk) for some practical tips on supporting transgender or non-binary children and young people.

## Timetable

Ensure that everyone is familiar with the timetable for the sessions. It is a good idea to establish a routine for your sessions and stick with it as far as possible. It is also helpful to have a large-scale visual timetable for the session up where everyone can see it, maybe with smaller versions in any other rooms you use. If you would like help with putting together a visual timetable using Widgit to create symbols, please do speak to your Synod CYW specialist or Children and Youth Development Officer (CYDO).

## Debrief and review

Although you will be tired after an energetic session and want to clear up and go home as quickly as possible, it is good practice and helpful to have a daily debrief of how everything went and to consider whether anything needs adapting for the next day; capturing positives and negatives for an overall evaluation of the holiday club. You might also like to include the children and families in your evaluation in some way and encourage children to share ideas for any future holiday clubs.

## Feedback

The writers of this resource would greatly appreciate any feedback on how your holiday club went, which parts of this document were useful to you, whether there was anything additional that you needed. Please email [children.youth@urc.org.uk](mailto:children.youth@urc.org.uk). Remember we would also love you to share with us any photographs for which you have the appropriate permissions.