



Sparks and *Stories*

2024 URC Children's and Youth Work Holiday Club

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 or children.youth@urc.org.uk.

Credits:

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Graphics: Laura Taylor

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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

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 And Faith Adventures: Children Together 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.

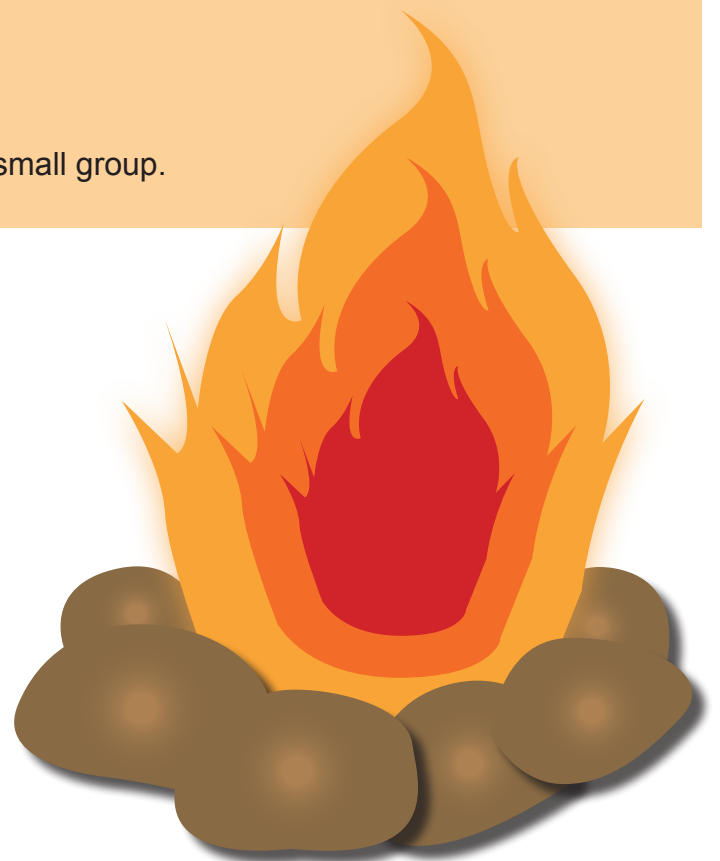
Games

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.

Songs


Sing along with Leo videos available on bit.ly/SparksHCPlaylist or from children.youth@urc.org.uk on request.

Sparks and Stories

Leo Roberts

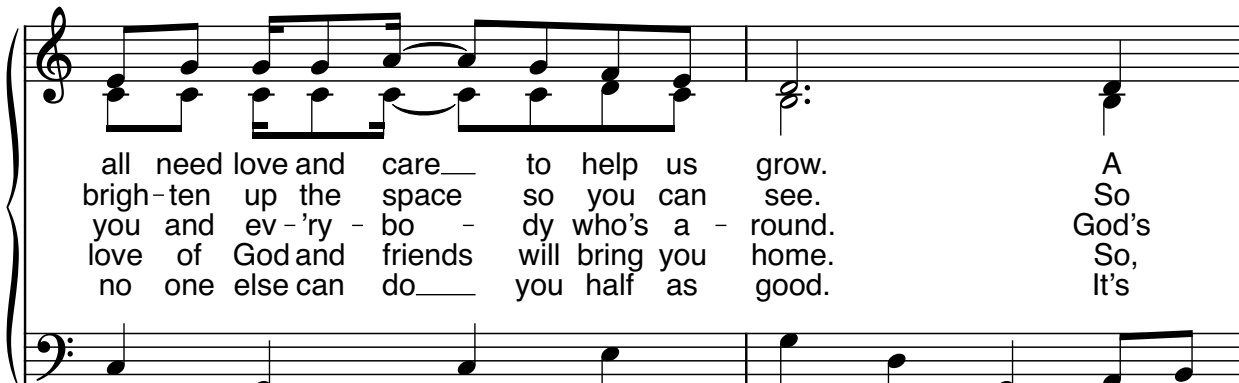
Joyfully (♩ = 100)

C F



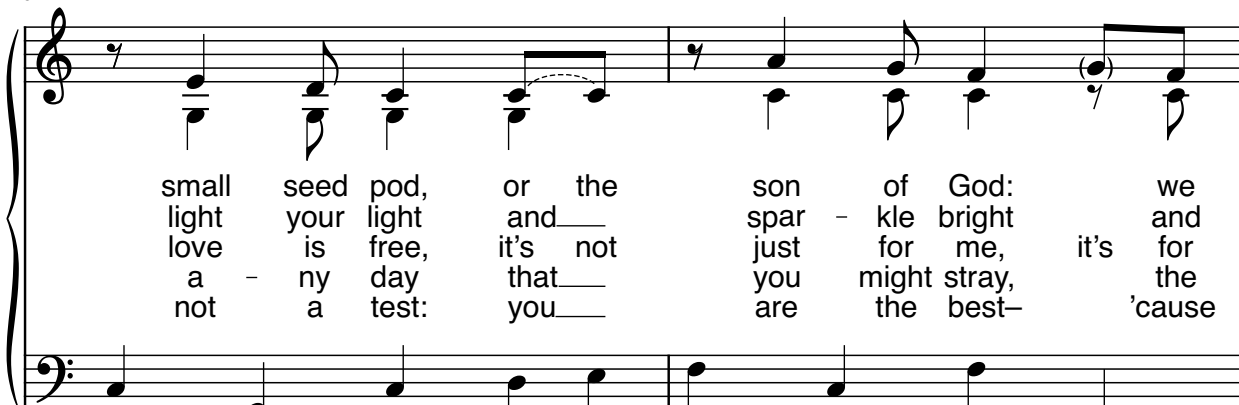
1. Start - ing small, then get - ting tall, we
2. dark - est night, a ti - ny light can
3. up a - bove, just feel God's love for
4. peo - ple say, though far a - way, the
5. what you do: go and be you, 'cause

3 C G



all need love and care to help us grow. A
brigh-ten up the space so you can see. So
you and ev-'ry - bo - dy who's a - round. God's
love of God and friends will bring you home. So,
no one else can do you half as good. It's

5 C F



small seed pod, or the son of God: we
light your light, and spar - kle bright and
love is free, it's not just for me, it's for
a - ny day that you are might stray, the
not a test: you are the best - 'cause

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7 C G7 C Fine

all need love and care to help us grow.
 brigh - ten up the space so you can see.
 you and ev - 'ry - bo - dy who's a - round.
 love of God and friends will bring you home.
 no one else can do you half as good!

9 **Chorus** Am F C

Sparks and sto - ries al - ways go to - geth - er.

11 Am F G 1.

Sit - ting round the camp - fire, we don't care a - bout the weath - er. 2. In the

13 2.3.4. G D.C. al Fine

care a - bout the weath - er. 3. From
 4. Some
 5. Do

Round the Campfire

Theme Song

Leo Roberts

Moderately (♩ = 90)

D

We see the sparks and hear the sto - ries round the camp-fire. The

4 G A D A/C# Bm

sun goes down and the sparks go high - er. We

6 G A D A/C# Bm

do some craft, talk to our friends, play some games, and the

8 G A D A/C# Bm G A

love of God means we will ne-ver be the same. As we see the sparks and

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11 D A/C# Bm A G A D G/A D

hear the sto-ries round the camp - fire to-day.____

Story, Story, Story

Leo Roberts

Moderately (♩ = 110)

C G

Lis - ten to a sto - ry, sto - ry, sto - ry, all a - bout God's

4 F C F C

glo - ry, glo - ry, glo - ry. Wo - men and men, boys and girls, with

7 F C Dm G C

no hair, long hair straight hair, curls, have all been part of God's

10 Dm G C

sto - ry, sto - ry, sto - ry. We're part of God's sto - ry, too.

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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

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

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. You are, however, encouraged to share any photographs with Church House Children's and Youth Work (with appropriate permissions – see 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. 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

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. 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. 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. 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 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. Remember we would also love you to share with us any photographs for which you have the appropriate permissions.

Reflections for team members and leaders

Day one

Expect the unexpected

Even if we have done a club before, the first day is always an anxious time: is anyone going to show up? What will the children be like? Are we up to doing this? But, perhaps more importantly, can we meet everyone's (including our own) expectations? This is also more pressing if this is your first time doing this.

The two readings today are about defying expectations.

The first is about the boy Jesus, who we often sing of as 'meek and mild'. We picture him as the most perfect, obedient child ever. This story shows him as anything but matching these imaginings. He has run off from his parents and is holding his own with the best theologians of his day as a child prodigy. When his parents discover him, he gives them a snotty comment that must have been rather annoying after scaring them half to death.

Similarly, the mustard seed parable is not we expect. We are not sure which type of mustard Jesus was talking about, but they are normally small, smelly shrubs that attract vermin, not the stately trees of our fond imagination.

The point is that we often feel less open to new experiences and want to remain in our comfort zones. We may be unused to having strange people in our church. We may have fond memories of past events or even long past events when people behaved differently. We may hate to admit things have changed radically.

We urge you to park these feelings and expectations. Be open to something new. The new people who may be attracted to our holiday offering can help us learn and be blessed through our time together. If we do things in partnership, we both benefit.

Be open to mutuality and surprises. God can be surprising!

What are the opinions and expectations you need to park in order to be open to the new experiences that this week offers?

Disobedient, disruptive Jesus,
Help us to lay aside our preconceptions.
Help us to put away our fears and worries about this week.
Holy Spirit, blow through our souls and through our buildings,
Clearing out our mustiness,
And bringing freshness to our souls and our lives.
We ask that you bless us in all we do this week.
Amen.

Day two

Sharing faith

The readings today are about public declaration: a very public baptism and Jesus's urging to shine our light so it can be seen.

For many of us, the hardest part of trying to be a good Christian is sharing our faith. We don't want to be impolite; we fear being a pushy zealot and we certainly don't want to say the wrong thing. So we often retreat into a busy, functional Christianity where we do things and stay busy to avoid those conversations.

If this is you, don't fear: you are in the majority.

It is often true that what is important is not what you say but rather how you 'are'. Be conscious and deliberate in welcoming. Talk to people as they drop their children off. Answer questions and, if you're not sure, say so. And then have a think about it and go back. Be honest that 'it's complicated'. Engage with kindness and integrity.

The most important thing you can do this week is simply be you – a person who is motivated enough to give up time to run these sessions. Just show people this and perhaps even tell them why it is important enough to do this. Don't worry, relax and trust – you are enough.

What is the biggest barrier that stops you from shining your light?

God, we are all scared of talking about you.
We're afraid of getting it wrong.
We're frightened that we'll show ourselves up.
We're frightened we'll let you down.
Help us relax, help us to trust.
Help us just to be.
Amen.

Day three

My neighbour can be exasperating

At this stage, it's likely to be mid-week or mid programme. You all may be feeling a bit exhausted. You might be asking, as Jesus was, 'why can't others do a little bit more?' This could be other church folk, the people who are dropping their kids and running, or even that person who is long on opinions but short on action.

Even if you have a great team and it's running like clockwork, in the mid-week session there is often a dip. If you're feeling any of this, take a deep breath. If you're not feeling this dip, make sure everyone thanks each other for being amazing.

Just a reminder of why we are here - the story of the good Samaritan is about asking that very difficult question of all - who is my neighbour? Who should I care for? Is there anyone beyond my immediate responsibility that I am called to treat well this week? The parable answers this question – it is even the people you have been taught to despise that you should care for.

Putting these readings together, we get a clear message – it's OK to feel as you feel, but everyone is within our circle of concern. The most annoying parent or co-worker. Or that child that always seems to be where they shouldn't (I once had a child that climbed up a pole and hung on a balcony rail during hide and seek, despite my best efforts to keep track of him). Our neighbours can be annoying. But that doesn't mean we don't care about and for them.

Continue – you're doing great!

How do we continue to work together in affirming and life-giving ways as the week progresses?

Lord Jesus, even you asked questions in exasperation,
Wondering why people couldn't just do what you needed them to do.
Give us the gifts of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control.
Use us beautifully.
We are yours.
Amen.

Day four

Uncompleted stories

If we stop halfway through both of these stories, we are in sad and difficult places. A dead Messiah and a disgraced wastrel eating pig slop. It's important to remember we are always at some point in a story. Sometimes it isn't always the most comfortable point. It doesn't mean where we are is the end of the story. In the case of both of these stories, it is resurrection, whether it be in body or relationship.

Wherever we are in our church life, we are all in need of both types of resurrection. It is hard to know where you are in your own story and in your church's story. It almost seems redundant to say that many churches have it tough in the current climate. Yours might be one of them. If you are struggling, treasure this time of outreach and connection. Well done, good and faithful servants!

Even if things are going swimmingly, this is a serious bit of work that has taken time and effort to pull off. Pat yourself on the back and treasure that this is a valuable part of your engagement with the wider community. Well done, good and faithful servants!

Wherever you are in your story, you are working towards resurrection. You are at one point in the story and it doesn't necessarily mean you know how anything ends. The journey you have undertaken with the children continues to be an unfolding story that you may not know the ending of.

Kindness has a way of bringing surprising results.

What resurrection do you hope for in your community?

Lord Jesus, we are simply at a point in our story.
Let us stay and be still and savour it.
Let us be in the moment,
Acknowledging our realities and our complexities.
Help us to find a blessing wherever we are
In this bubble of time.
Amen.

Day five

The ongoing invitation

You've got there! Well done!

This week you've been doing the great commission – trying to make disciples and friends. If you haven't already, pat yourself on your backs!

The great banquet parable tells us that it isn't always the obvious, or even the people we ask, who responds to God's invitation. Think of who has been here this week. Not just the bright and shiny children but the shy, the quiet, those who might have struggled; the loud, noisy ones who have perhaps driven you to distraction. Think of the parents and carers, the people who have perhaps looked unsure of their welcome, perhaps looked like they felt judged, perhaps a little embarrassed about dropping their kids off and running.

If we look at the parable, these are people who need a special invitation. They are most likely to feel uninvited. Be intentional. Be invitational. Do what Jesus asks us. A genuine invitation, whether it is taken up or not, tells people they are loved and valued.

Yes, this isn't always easy or comfortable but you've probably been doing it all week.
Don't stop now!

But also do something great for yourself and your teammates. Celebrate this win. And by this I don't mean butts on seats type of win but rather celebrate the fact that YOU DID IT. Whatever happened, whatever joys and sorrows, no matter what successes or slip-ups, remember you have been a disciple trying to make disciples!

That, quite simply, is awesome!

What do you celebrate most from this programme?

God, thank you. We're nearly there.
We offer you all that has happened this week.
We offer it in trust that you will use it for your holy purposes.
Bless us all who participated in this week.
Bless all our efforts our hopes and dreams.
Help us go from this week knowing we are affirmed and loved.
Amen.

Starting small – Jesus's childhood

Bible readings



The boy Jesus
at the Temple, Luke 2:41-52 bit.ly/3Su6eK8

Parable of the mustard seed, Matthew 13:31-32 bit.ly/3SrmcEM

Bible video

- Jesus in the temple – Saddleback kids bit.ly/47GkNP2
- Parable of the Mustard Seed: Parish of Moulsecomb bit.ly/3u2rtt2

Arrival activity

Baby Bunting

Depending on numbers, time and space in the room, either have three triangles of thin card for each person or have one triangle of thin card for each person but divide the triangle into three parts. Provide coloured crayons and felt tip pens for children to decorate the triangles (ask the adult helpers to have made theirs in advance). One card or part of card is to represent them as a baby – what was special about them? One card or part of card is to represent them now – what is special about them now? The third card or part of card is to represent them in the future – what are their hopes and dreams for the future? As triangles are decorated, they can be stapled onto a long piece of ribbon which can be used to hang the bunting up around the hall. Completion of this activity can earn campers the “Starting Small” badge.

Story

Jesus in the Temple

“I mean, seriously! There’s no need for this. I can’t even go and talk with my friends without one of them calling me back to them. They’re treating me like I’ve done something wrong, like it’s all my fault. They’re my parents! They should have known where I was! Did they bother to check the temple before they left Jerusalem? No. Did they bother to check that their son was in the group? No. Did they bother, at any point during the day, to check the group to see where I was? No! Yet, somehow, it’s all my fault, they were worried, they thought I’d gotten lost, blah, blah, blah.

I mean, I’m not some silly little kid! I’m 12! I’m practically a man and yet here they are, treating me like a kid. Wish I was back in the temple.

I really loved it in there. I felt really close to Him....y’know, Abba, my dad. That’s why I stayed on and didn’t leave with the others. It was so great listening to all the teachers and asking them

questions. They were so surprised that I could understand what they were teaching! I don't know why. I mean, come on, there isn't much that I don't know about Abba. I asked them questions, especially when they hadn't always quite understood what the scriptures were telling them about Him. They listened and thought on it. It's really cool that they listened to me. They didn't treat me like a kid. Not like mum and dad, my other dad. Yes, I have two dads, deal with it.

I'm so annoyed at them for treating me like I did something wrong! But, if I'm honest, I do feel really bad. If you'd seen their faces when they came to the temple, especially mum's. She'd been crying, she thought she was never going to see me again. My heart broke when I saw her and I wanted to cry and then I looked at dad. His eyes were full of fear and heartache. Then he saw me, and he smiled and then cried a little.

They were really scared. Maybe I should have told someone that I was going to stay on at the temple. I mean, I shouldn't have to, but ... didn't mean to worry them.

I really love them. Abba placed me with my mum and dad for good reason. They love me so much.

Ugh, don't you just hate it when you realise that you were possibly, only very slightly, in the wrong? I'll make it up to them. I'll be the best son they could ever wish for! And as for having to stay close by them for the trip home, well, at least I get their undivided attention! Silver linings and all that."

Parable

Tiny as tiny can be, I hold something precious in my hand.

I open my fingers and thumb ... are you ready? One – two – three – four – five.

Do you see it? Tiny as tiny can be?

Small, and brown and round and oh, so dead looking. What do you think it could be?

It's a seed, of course. A tiny tiny seed. It's a mustard seed. And hidden away in this tiny seed is a glimpse of God's wonderful kingdom. Let me share the story. Story, story, story ...

A person once had a mustard seed – just one. It wasn't enough to put on a sandwich to give it some extra seasoning. It wasn't enough to start a farm and go into business selling mustard plants. It wasn't big enough to put in a bird feeder to feed a hungry sparrow or finch. It just sat there on the table, doing nothing.

The person picked up the seed between their fingers, rolled it around thoughtfully for a moment or two, and then went outside. They found a piece of earth, pulled out the weeds and loosened the soil. Perfect – not too damp and not too dry, not too sunny and not too shaded. Deep into the soil they planted the little seed, tenderly patted the soil around it, gave it a drink of water to get it going, and then waited.

First a tiny glimpse of green among the dark dull grains of earth, and then a tiny green shoot appeared. The life that had been stored inside the seed was bursting out and growing and growing and growing. First a shoot and then a plant. First a plant and then a shrub. First a shrub and then a tree. And still it grew and grew and grew.

No longer locked in a tiny seed, the mustard tree grew until it was so big that it provided shelter for the birds of the air to build their nests.

This story is a parable, a picture story, of course. I wonder what it tells us about God's kingdom.

Campfire song

Sing to the tune – The Farmer's in the Dell (start the song quite low and increase the note up the scales as you sing each verse, have fun getting higher and higher).

We've got a mustard seed,
We've got a mustard seed,
Hi-ho, the derry-o,
We've got a mustard seed.

We all plant the seed,
We all plant the seed,
Hi-ho, the derry-o,
We all plant the seed.

The seed begins to grow,
The seed begins to grow,
Hi-ho, the derry-o,
The seed begins to grow.

It grows into a tree,
It grows into a tree,
Hi-ho, the derry-o,
It grows into a tree.

The birds come to the tree,
The birds come to the tree,
Hi-ho, the derry-o,
The birds come to the tree.

The tree becomes a home,
The tree becomes a home,
Hi-ho, the derry-o,
The tree becomes a home.

The tree, drops its seeds,
The tree, drops its seeds,
Hi-ho the derry-o,
The tree, drops its seeds.

The seed begins to grow,
The seed begins to grow,
Hi-ho the derry-o,
The seed begins to grow.



Start the song over again from here if you want to, adding fun actions using hands or the full body.

Wondering questions

- I wonder where you see God in today's stories and in your story.
- I wonder what one thing you liked best from today's stories.
- I wonder what you will remember about today's stories and maybe share with someone else.

What's your story?

- Can you share the story of a time you got lost?
- Can you share the story of a time you helped or taught someone much older or younger than you?
- Can you share the story of the first time you heard about Jesus or that God loved you?

Small group prayer

Growing Tree Prayers

What you need:

- Green paper A4 cut in half lengthways
- Sticky tape or glue
- Scissors.

What you do:

1. Give everyone a piece of paper. Invite everyone to think about their hopes and dreams for what they would like to see grow or develop (eg freedom, confidence, happiness etc) and to write or draw them on the paper.
2. From the short edge of the paper, with the prayers on the inside, roll it up to make a tube. Stick the edge with tape from the bottom to approximately halfway up the tube, leaving the other half loose. From the open end, make slits down to the halfway point at about 1cm intervals. This will make the leaves of your growing tree. Younger children may need help with the cutting.
3. Sit in a circle. Each person needs to hold the base of their prayer tree firmly in one hand. From the cut end of the tube, slowly pull up from the centre and watch as your prayers grow into a tree. As the trees grow, you can say the prayer together:

Thank you, Lord, for helping me grow... I am growing with you. Thank you, Lord, for all good things... I am growing with you. Thank you, Lord, for being my friend... I am growing with you.
Amen.



Activity/craft

Small Things

What you need:

- Some spent match-sticks or cut up wooden skewer
- Embroidery thread
- Wool
- Small beads
- Silver foil
- Pipe cleaners
- Small pieces of pasta or rice.



What you do:

This activity is an open ended creative activity making small people, animals and objects in a variety of ways. You could use match sticks wrapped in wool or embroidery thread or create some small figures using crunched up foil or shaping pipe cleaners. You might use thread or glue to join pieces together. You could use pasta to create small things and use felt pens to draw on them. Why not create a group of miniature things to retell the story.

(Remember that very small hands or children/adults with fine motor skill difficulties may need extra support with this activity but without the leader taking control of the creativity – ensure that the children are given instructions if they need help).

STEM activity

Things in a matchbox

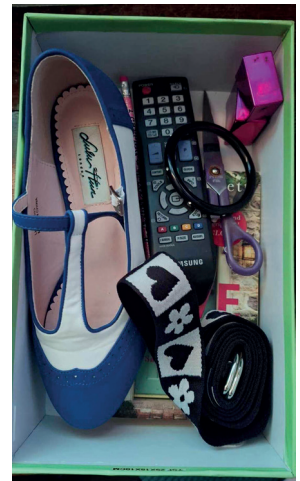
What you need:

- Small matchbox or small box
- Small items (seeds, buttons, coins, marbles, rubbers, beads, small Lego pieces, small marshmallows, stones, flower heads, leaves)
- Small sticky white labels
- Felt tips.



What you do:

1. First decorate the small white sticky label and stick it to the top of the matchbox. You could write the words... 'starting small but growing with God'. Search the area you are in for things which fit into the matchbox. If you have access to an outside space, this can be an ideal opportunity for this, otherwise use the items provided. How much can you fit in your matchbox?
2. Talk together about how things might start small but can grow ... such as ideas, a seed, a person or pet, a thought, a prayer.
3. You may want to extend the activity find a bigger box to put all the individual matchboxes in – or a series of boxes getting bigger – to show that small starts can have a bigger impact when they are put together, too.



Recipe

Popcorn

What you need:

- Popcorn kernels
- Three tablespoons oil (if you are using the pan method)
- A heavy based saucepan and lid and an oven top OR a popcorn machine OR a microwave oven, a pyrex glass bowl and a ceramic plate to act as a lid
- Toppings: sugar, butter and salt, melted chocolate
- A big bowl to serve.



What you do:

Pan method: This will need to be done by an adult!

1. Put the oil in a large heavy-based pan over a medium heat. Add a small number of popcorn kernels, cover with a lid and leave to pop (this can take up to five minutes). This will show you that the oil is now hot enough.

2. Remove the pan from the heat and uncover. Add all the remaining corn, cover with the lid and shake the pan to mix the corn with the hot oil. Set aside for one minute to rest and come to an even temperature.
3. Return the pan to the heat. Shake every now and again as the rest of the kernels pop – you may need to crack the lid slightly to let a little steam out. When the popping has really slowed down, remove from the heat.

Microwave method:

Add the popcorn kernels to a medium to large glass bowl (make sure it's tempered glass) and place a ceramic dinner plate on top of the bowl to act as a lid. Microwave for three to five minutes, then stop when you hear a few seconds between pops.

Popcorn machine method:

Place the popcorn into the machine and let the popping begin. Remember that it does get hot so this needs to be carefully supervised.

You can add lots of different flavours to your popcorn, sweet or savoury. Toss with any flavourings while still hot, then allow to cool slightly before serving.

Games

Balloon Tree

Start with a bag of balloons and a roll of tape for each team.

On "GO", teams will have a pre-set amount of time to build a balloon tree using the balloons and tape they have. They need to blow up the balloons (you may choose to supply a manual balloon pump) and then tape them together as best they can. They are not allowed to tape the tree to the floor or anything else, and once the time is up the tree must stand for ten seconds without falling over. You could even provide each group with an origami bird or an Easter chick to sit in the tree and this must stay balanced in the tree without falling for ten seconds. The winning team is the team with the tallest tree.



Find Jesus

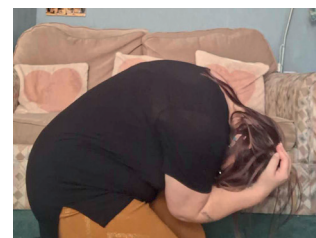
Use a model (eg from a nativity set) or cardboard cut out with a picture of Jesus on it and, when the group are busy doing something else, hide Jesus somewhere in the room. The challenge is to be the first person to 'find' Jesus. An alternative is to hide lots of images from the life of Jesus around the room and put a party blower with each one. As each child finds a picture, they stand on the spot and just keep blowing their party blower until everyone has found one. Be aware that some children (and adults) may struggle with the noise and need the option to sit this game out in a quieter space.

Large group prayer

Movement Prayer

Everyone makes themselves as small as possible, using the smallest voice they have to pray, and say together: God, I'm only small but help me grow in your love. Then repeat this line four to six times, each time making themselves a little bigger and a little louder until they are almost shouting and are as wide as possible.

Then, to finish, jump up and shout Amen.



Shining bright – Jesus baptism



Bible reading

The baptism of Jesus, Matthew 3:13-17 bit.ly/3SrmBXO

Parable of the lamp on a stand, Matthew 5:15-16 bit.ly/3Ubm1OZ

Bible video

- Parable of lamp on a stand – St Columba’s Presbyterian Church bit.ly/3Ogf3od
- Baptism of Jesus – Noah’s Lego World bit.ly/3vVuT12

Arrival activity

Tealight

You will need an LED tealight for each person, and an assortment of things to craft with: card, lego, junk for example. The task is to create a lantern to hold the tealight so it can be held up high, safely, to share its light as brightly as possible. Completion of this task can earn campers the “Shining Bright” badge.

Story

Baptism of Jesus

Sit the children in two groups, one group to represent the water and one group to represent the people. You need two volunteers, one to play Jesus and one to play John. The children representing the water move their arms like the motion of waves, or hold hands and do a seated Mexican wave, or could use some pieces of blue material and shake them to create a river. The children representing the people can jostle and hold their hands to their ears as though listening.

In the middle of the hard, dry land, a river was flowing (*get the children to create the effect of the water*). From the north to the south it flowed, sometimes a broad, smooth and gentle stream, (*get the children to create a gentle stream*) sometimes more lively (*get the children to make their movements a little more lively*) as it skipped and twisted between the rocks. On and on the river flowed, (*get the children to return to gentle movements*) through the Sea of Galilee and on to the Dead Sea, its banks green with trees and grasses, nourished by its life-giving waters in this hard, dry land.

And in the middle of the river stood a man. John. He was quite a sight. His hair was wild. His clothes were made out of itchy, scratchy camel hair (*a volunteer to be John can stand in the middle of the children, occasionally scratching*). He marched up and down the river, splashing water as he went (*as John walks near a child, they should raise their arms quickly and shout 'splash'*).

People had come from all over to hear John talk (*get the children to cup their hands round their ears to listen*). He stood in the middle of the river (*John stands still and pretends to shout, cupping hands round mouth*) and shouted "Change your hearts and lives, because the kingdom of heaven is coming soon"!

Some of the people heard what John said. They wanted to get to know God, so they waded into the water. (*Choose three children in turn to step forward to John, forming a heart symbol using their fingers or placing both hands on their heart. John puts his hand on their head and they duck down as though ducking into the water*). They told John they were sorry for all the things they had done wrong and wanted a new life, and then John dunked them into the water! (*as the three children are each baptised, the children representing the water can raise their arms and 'splash'*) "I baptise you with water, to show that your hearts and lives have changed," John told them. "But there is one coming later

who is greater than I am. I am not good enough to carry his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit." The people scratched their heads and wondered, "Who could be greater than John?" (*children representing the people scratch their heads and pretend to think*).

Suddenly the people noticed someone walking towards the river. It was Jesus! He was coming to be baptised too. John couldn't understand – he knew Jesus was God's son, so why would he need to be baptised? If anyone was being baptised it should be John being baptised by Jesus, surely. But Jesus insisted. "We should do all things that are right," he said. (*John baptises Jesus*).

As Jesus came out of the water, he saw the heavens open and a dove, which was God's spirit, came and settled on him (*all the other children make their hands into a bird shape and flutter the wings, moving from having hands above head to having hands in lap*). A voice from heaven spoke. "This is my Son and I love him. I am very pleased with him".

Everyone who was there was amazed! They knew that they had seen something really, really special happen that day. Their hearts were beating faster – du-dum, du-dum, du-dum, du-dum (*children all place both hands on their hearts and move the upper hand in time with the heart beats*). As they gazed at Jesus and up at the heavens, they wondered: Maybe they too might change their hearts and their lives in a new life with Jesus. And the river flowed on, bringing new life to the hard, dry land on either bank.

Parable

Gathered round the campfire is the perfect place for a story. With the darkness behind us, we are drawn to the flickering light.

People say you can see pictures in the flames of a real fire as they writhe and twist together, warm and comforting yet with a taste of adventure and a tiny hint of danger.

Do you have your torches with you? Shine them on the ceiling, let the light play there for a while.

Close your eyes and feel the darkness, open up your imagination – see a lighthouse, see a candle, see a lantern, see a lamp. In the dark and in the light we see a glimpse of God's wonderful kingdom. Let me share the story. Story, story, story.

A person once had a lantern. It was a beautiful lantern. The frame of the lantern was made of bronze with highly polished golden gleam. The windows on five sides of the hexagonal lantern were made of the clearest glass, while the sixth side was a tiny, shiny door. There was a hoop at the top to hold or hang the lantern by. And inside the lantern was a pure white candle.

The person picked up the lantern and opened the tiny, shiny door. They struck a match. A tiny flame in the darkness. Quick – don't let it go out, don't let it burn your fingers ... touch the flame to the candle wick and set it alight.

A flicker ... Wait for it ... A flame. The candle shines brightly.

The person blew out the match and closed the door of the lantern. Oh how that lantern shone. Oh what a glorious light.

The person looked at the lantern. There was just one more thing to do. An upturned bucket would do the trick.

There ... put it over the lantern and hide it away.

This story is a parable, a picture story, of course. I wonder what it tells us about God's kingdom.

Campfire song

Sing to the tune 'This little light of mine'.

This little light of mine,
I'm gonna let it shine,
This little light of mine,
I'm gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine,
I'm gonna let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Don't hide it away,
I'm gonna let it shine,
Don't hide it away,
I'm gonna let it shine,



Don't hide it away,
I'm gonna let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Put it way up high,
I'm gonna let it shine,
Put it way up high,
I'm gonna let it shine,
Put it way up high,
I'm gonna let it shine,

Let it shine, let it shine, LET IT SHINE (Jazz hands)



Wondering questions

- I wonder where you see God in today's stories and in your story.
- I wonder what one thing you liked best from today's stories.
- I wonder what you will remember about today's stories and maybe share with someone else.

What's your story?

- Can you share the story of a baptism or Christening (any age) you have been at?
- Can you share the story of a time you told someone about what Jesus means to you?
- Can you share the story of how you got your name?

Small group prayer

Shining bright

What you need:

- Old CDs or DVDs (check what images are on the label)
- Blu tack
- Glass pebbles
- Marker pens.

What you do:

Blu tack a glass pebble to the centre of a recycled CD or DVD – this will enable the disc to spin. Invite the children to think of people who shine for them: it may be people who help them, people they wish to be more like, people who are good role models. Draw or write this onto the CD using marker pens to decorate it.

Children could also think of the skills God has given them which mean they can also support and help others. As the disc spins, they give their thanks to God.

Activity/craft

T-shirt decorating

Each child will need an old t-shirt which they can decorate to make a new, fun item of clothing.

You can use fabric paints, pens, iron-on patches or additional fabric to create a dazzling 'light' design.



Remember to place a piece of cardboard inside the t-shirt so that pen ink or paint doesn't leak through to the back panel. Younger groups may prefer simpler materials such as paint or pens; older groups may prefer to try a new skill such as sewing.



STEM activity

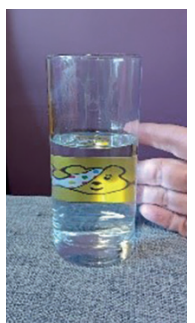
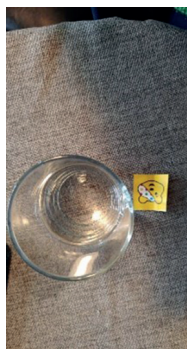
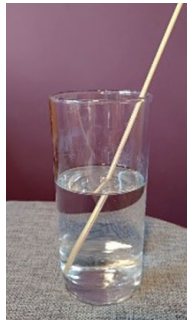
Light Refraction Experiment

What you need:

- Drinking straw or a pen
- Clear water or glass of water
- Long clear glass or glass with water.

What you do:

1. Fill the glass half full with water.
2. Stand a straw/pen in the glass of water quite straight and watch from the side.
3. Slowly tilt the straw and watch what happens.
4. Raise the glass or lower your eyes to look at the straw from under the water surface. How does the straw look now.
5. Move to different angles and watch how the straw seems to change in shape at the water surface as you move.
6. Try other objects and see how they change in the water.
7. You can also place images under the glass or at the side of the glass how do they change; try moving them away from the glass, how do they look now?



Recipe

Sunrise drink

What you need:

- 60ml orange juice
- Orange slice
- 60ml cranberry juice
- 15ml peach juice
- 15ml pineapple juice
- Sugar
- Ice
- Glass
- Paper/reusable straw.



What you do:

1. Wash hands to start. Dip the rim of the glass in orange juice, let it drip to remove excess fluid and then dip it in sugar to create a sugary rim.
2. Fill a glass with ice, crushed or cubed.

3. Add the peach and pineapple juice. Pour in 60ml of orange juice over the ice.
4. Carefully pour in 60ml of cranberry juice on top of the orange juice so that it layers rather than mixes in.
5. Add a slice of orange for garnish.

Games

Under a Bushel

Line the group up according to height then take each alternate player to create two similar teams. Label them Team A and Team B and then line the two teams up opposite each other. Number the team members, starting at opposite ends of the lines, so that player one on the first team is opposite the player with the highest number on the opposite team.

In the centre of the room have twelve upturned buckets spread out across the floor and twelve LED nightlights. Put half the nightlights underneath buckets and the other half on top of buckets. The leader shouts out a number and then shouts GO, starting a 30 second timer. The two players whose number is called out run to the centre. The player from team A tries to place all the nightlights under buckets, the player from team B tries to place all the nightlights on top of the buckets. After 30 seconds, call out another number. The players currently playing return to their places and the new players take over. Once everyone has had a go, count the nightlights and see which team has won.

Pass the Cup

Water games can lead to spillage (the best ones do!) so ensure you play in a suitable area and have mop and bucket ready to stop floors becoming slippery.

Split the group into teams. Teams should sit on the floor in a line, one behind the other. The person at the front of the team should have a bucket full of water in front of them and there should be an empty bucket at the back of the line. Each team needs a paper cup.

On "Go" the first person in the team fills their cup with water. They then pass it over their head to the person sitting behind them. This person takes the cup and passes it over their head, and so on until it reaches the person at the back of the line. This person stands up, pours the water into the bucket at the back of the line, then runs to the front of the line. The team shuffles back one place and the player with the cup sits down at the front and fills the cup again. Continue until everyone in the team has had a go at the front (so that everyone has an equal chance of getting wet), then the winning team is the team with the most water in their bucket.

Large group prayer

You will need one LED tea light for each person.

1. Each child sitting in the circle has an unlit tealight in front of them. Choose who will begin.
2. The first person says a word or phrase to express something they have enjoyed or learned during this session.



3. They then pick up the tealight in front of them, turn it on, and pass it onto the person next to them using the words: Let's shine for Jesus together! If children feel uncomfortable praying out loud, they can turn their candle on in silence and the leader can say the words "Let's shine for Jesus together" on their behalf as they pass the candle on.
4. The person receiving the light, places it on the floor in front of them and picks up their own, unlit candle. They then say a word or phrase of their own and light their own candle, passing it on to the next person.
5. The process is repeated around the circle as the light grows and until everybody has a lit candle in front of them.
6. The leader then says:
 Help us, dear Jesus, to shine as a light for you,
 In all we do each and every day.
 Amen.



Love God, love others – Jesus ministry



Bible reading

The Greatest Commandment, Matthew 26:36-40 bit.ly/48G5gjF

Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37 bit.ly/48LDhyU

Bible video

- The Most Important Commandment – Cartoonbible bit.ly/3S5UCvr
- Jesus – Love God, love others – Little Seeds bit.ly/48KcB1B
- Parable of the Good Samaritan – the miracle maker bit.ly/3OdhBna

Arrival activity

Sharing God's love

Explain that today we will be thinking about God's love and how we share it with others. Give every child a card and ask them to think of one thing that they could do today to share God's love. You may need to help with ideas such as be kind, use kind words, help someone, serve someone at snack time and so on. They can write and illustrate these on the card and decorate it. Put these cards up in the group area as a reminder for the day ahead. At the end of the day, review all the promises and hand out badges to say how we all tried hard to show God's love to each other. Completion of this task can earn campers the "Love God, love others" badge.

Story

Love God, Love others

A story poem to tell with a repetitive line that enables the children to join in.

Jesus was more than a good man,
Jesus was the son of God.
He came to serve and save the world,
He came to show God's love.

In just a few years he left his mark,
Let's pause and take a look:
Some of the stories of things he did
Can be found here in this book (*show the Bible*).

We are all God's family,
We are sisters and brothers.
Jesus said go ...
Love God and love others.

(During the following statements, you could show images of each example of loving God and loving others)

Jesus loved God and God loved him too,
His whole life showed us what we can do.
He healed the sick, the blind and the lame,
He said we can go and do the same.
He fed the hungry with the help of a boy.
He cared about others, turning sadness to joy.

We are all God's family,
We are sisters and brothers. Jesus
said go ...
Love God and love others.

He chose twelve friends to be on his team.
He taught them to be kind and not
be mean.
He calmed a storm and walked on water.
He raised from the dead the centurion's
daughter.
People would come to hear the stories
he told.
He cared for everyone, young and old.

We are all God's family,
We are sisters and brothers.
Jesus said go ...
Love God and love others.

He challenged the leaders. He put up a fight
When things were unfair, or simply not right.
He talked to the people no one wanted
to know.
He went to the places no one wanted to go.
He spoke words of love, hope and peace.
He went the extra mile for the lost and
the least.

We are all God's family,
We are sisters and brothers.
Jesus said go ...
Love God and love others.

So what can we do to love God and love
others?

What does it mean to be sisters and
brothers?

There are many things Jesus did, that you
might not do
Because Jesus was Jesus and you are you;
But He told us to go, to try and to love,
Remembering that God is our help from
above.

We are all God's family,
We are sisters and brothers.
Jesus said go ...
Love God and love others.

Parable

Close your eyes and open up your imagination. Picture your friend, your best friend, your best friend in all the world. I wonder what you'd do if your best friend needed your help.

I wonder, is there anyone you wouldn't help. What if it wasn't your best friend, not even a friend? What if it was just someone you knew, or even a stranger? What if it was – wait for it – your most hated enemy in the whole wide world?

Open your eyes and look down at your hands. In the kindness of our hands, we see a glimpse of God's wonderful kingdom.

A person was once on a journey, carrying their pack on their back, walking along a lonely, winding road from one city to the next. Then suddenly – ambush! Muggers leapt out from behind the trees and rocks, beating and kicking till the traveller lay broken and bleeding by the path, and ran off taking with them everything the traveller had owned.

Who would help? Ah, here comes someone from the temple, hustling and bustling on their way to worship. Surely a godly person would help. No, the godly person takes one look and goes on hustling and bustling by on the other side of the road.

Ah, here comes someone else from the temple, looks like a musician or a door keeper perhaps. Maybe this person's a bit more practical, surely this person will help. This godly person stops... draws closer... leans over to look... and just as quickly disappears off down the track like greased lightning.

Ah, here comes someone else. It's a foreigner, a stranger, this person won't help at all. Strangers don't help strangers here – it's too dangerous. And foreigners don't help foreigners – the two groups don't get on. If two godly people on their way to the temple won't stop and help, then this passer by will definitely just pass on by.

The foreigner saw the traveller in distress and straight away knew what had to be done. Wounds were washed and cleaned and bandaged.. and that was not all. The traveller was lifted gently off the path and placed on the foreigner's donkey. Slowly and steadily, they journeyed further along the road together to a nearby hostel, a safe place for the injured traveller to rest and recover some strength, all paid for by the foreigner who had come to the rescue.

This story is a parable, a picture story, of course.

I wonder what it tells us about God's kingdom.

Campfire song

To the tune of "This old man, he played one".

This song works really well as a circle song with our arms around each other.

God loves you, God loves me,
We're a happy family.
With a great big hug especially for you,
Won't you say you love God too?

I love you, you love me,
We're a happy family.
With a great big hug, especially for you,
Won't you say you love me too?



Wondering questions

- I wonder where you see God in today's stories and in your story.
- I wonder what one thing you liked best from today's stories.
- I wonder what you will remember about today's stories and maybe share with someone else.

What's your story?

- Can you share the story of a time you helped someone who was hurt or unwell?
- Can you share the story of a time someone had to help you?
- Can you share the story of what you might do when you are older?

Small group prayer

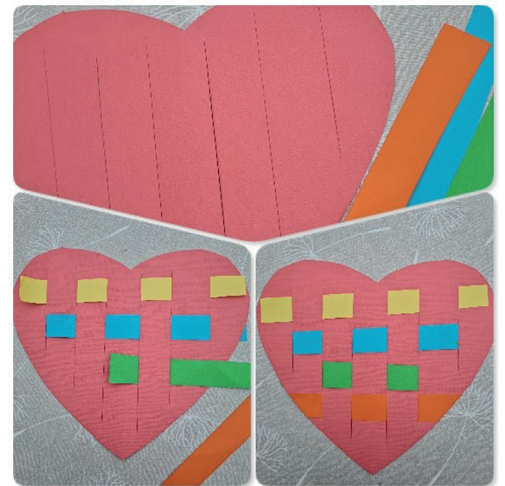
Woven Heart Prayer

What you need:

- Card heart shapes cut from card
- Strips of coloured paper about 1.5cm wide
- Glue.

Before you begin, make some cuts lengthways in the heart about 1cm apart and well away from the edges so that the strips of paper can be woven through the heart.

Invite everyone to think about the people who might need help and need to know God's love and care. Write your prayers for others on the strips of paper. When the prayers have been written, weave the strips through the heart. Put some glue at the end of the strips to secure them in place.



Dear God,
Thank you that you love us and care for us.
Help us to show your love to others people.
May we be good friends and neighbours.
Amen.

Activity/craft

First Aid Kit

1. First make your box. You could re-use cereal boxes or similar. Paint, colour or cover with coloured paper, then use paint or tape to add a white cross on the top. If you are using a cereal box, you will need to re-seal the top and cut a flap in the side of the box.
2. Some groups may choose to create a kit to help those who are ill or hurt, like the traveller in the story; others may choose to create a kit to help someone's relationship with God.
3. Think carefully about what items you will need in your type of kit and how they might be used. You could discuss this as a group or in pairs.
4. Draw pictures, make playdough models or cut and stick your First Aid contents from images that have been printed out.



STEM activity

Timeline

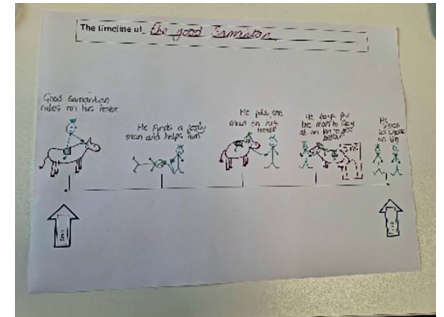
What you need:

- A3 pieces of paper OR large piece of wallpaper
- Colouring pens and pencils.

What you do:

You may need to explain in advance how timelines work – that they are a chronological order of events such as, when born, significant events, finishing point. They are going to create a timeline using words and pictures. This could be for the life of Jesus, for their own lives, or for the good Samaritan's journey (or all, if you have time). Decide on the starting point and finishing point and have a quick chat about what to include on the timeline.

The timelines could be individual or one large one with everyone contributing to it.



Recipe

Fake Wounds

What you need:

- Rice Krispies (gluten free)
- White chocolate (dairy free)
- Red food colouring
- Jam.

What you do:

1. Melt the white chocolate and then mix in red food colouring. Mix in some Rice Krispies. Place the mixture onto some clingfilm and add some jam into the middle.
2. Place the cling film onto your arm and arrange the Krispies cake into a nasty looking scar. Now you can really pick and eat your scabs.



Games

Ministry Line

Set up two washing lines across the room and give each of two teams a basket of pegs. You need to have prepared a set of twelve cards with recognisable images of stories from Jesus' life, one set per team, but shuffled so that they are not in the same order. A runner from each team comes to collect a first card, returns to the team, and as a team they have to decide what the story is and where it comes along a timeline of Jesus's life. Use pegs to peg the card where the team thinks it should go along the washing line. Then another runner should come to collect the next card in their pile. Allocate five points for the first team to finish and then a point for every story that's in the right place on the washing line.



Good Samaritan Race

Give each team five rolled up crepe bandages. One volunteer from each team sits at the far end of the room on a chair. On "GO", the team members run to their volunteer. Between them they must bandage each leg, each arm and the head with the crepe bandages, leaving no bandage dangling. The volunteer cannot help! Once satisfied that their volunteer is completely bandaged up, the team must find a way to transport their volunteer to the other end of the room and across the finishing line. For older children, teams could be disqualified if the bandages come undone.

Large Group Prayer

Parachute Prayer

You will need either a large parachute or some bed sheets.

1. Ensure everyone has hold of the parachute, float it up and down a few times to gain air, then float it as high as possible. Everyone is to quickly stand under the parachute, pulling it down behind them and then tucking the edge of the parachute under their bottoms. The leader says, Dear God, we think of people who feel scared and sad. Let them know your comfort and security, help them feel safe.
2. Stand and hold the parachute and float it up and down again and then sit on the edge of the parachute.
3. The leader says, Dear God, we think of people who feel lonely and left out of things. Let them know your love and friendship.
4. Then stand and float the parachute up and down and quickly sit, pulling the parachute down to create a large bubble.
5. The leader says, 'Dear God, we think of people who fill our lives with fun and friendship and love. Thank you for the joy and comfort they bring. Amen'.



The way back – Jesus death and resurrection



Bible reading

Matthew 27:32-54 and 28:1-10 Jesus death and resurrection bit.ly/3St5QLG
bit.ly/3Udv6a6

Luke 15:11-32 Prodigal son bit.ly/3Hs8dZ9

Bible video

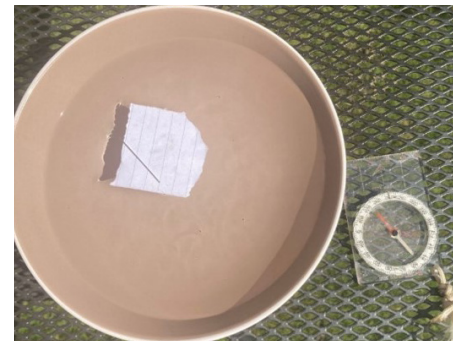
- Parable of the Prodigal Son Saddleback Kids bit.ly/496NXaX
- Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection – The Gospel project bit.ly/3StZH1R

Arrival activity

Make a Compass

Explain that magnets work by having a magnetised piece of metal (needle) that will align itself to the earth's magnetic core as it is moved, pointing north. This helps us to be able to know where we are and what direction we are facing.

Make a simple magnet together and have some fun experimenting. Groups with very young children may need extra help and support or even to have the compass set up before the children arrive.



You will need:

- Paper clip or a needle
- Small bowl or saucer
- Water, enough to fill the plastic bottle half
- Small magnet (fridge magnets work)
- Small circular piece of paper marked N on one edge and S 180 degrees round the circle from the N.

What you do:

1. Open up the paper clip so it resembles a straight needle, or take your needle.
2. "Fill the bowl/saucer with water. Take the magnet and rub it along the length of the paper clip/needle in one direction about 20 times.
3. Place the paperclip on the circle of paper with one end on the N and the other end on the S.
4. Place onto the water and watch it spin until it stops and the needle points North, like a compass.
5. Once you have a working compass, you could set some challenges, eg can the children use the compass to find out which direction the door is, or the pulpit etc. Completing this task can earn the "way back" badge.

Story

The way back

Out Of The Box style story using symbols/reflective story.

You will need a box filled with the elements as listed in the script.

Gather the group into a circle so that all can see the box. This box has everything we need for today's story. I wonder what we will find and what they will tell us. Open the box (*place a Jesus figure in the centre of the story area*).

It's a story about Jesus (*place a person figure opposite the Jesus figure*).

And it's a story about us (*place a big paper heart in front of Jesus and begin to lay threads of golden ribbon coming from Jesus to the person*).

God loves us more than we will ever understand. The Bible says we can't understand how high, deep and wide God's love is for us (*turn the person figure to be facing away from Jesus and place blocks of wood onto the ribbons*).

The Bible says that nothing can separate us from God's love. But we can forget God's love and choose to live life without God. Sometimes we can think that there is no way back. Does God love me? (*Place a cross on the heart near Jesus and begin to remove the blocks of wood on the ribbons, removing them from sight. Place a compass on the cross*).

With God anything is possible. God sent Jesus to show us once and for all how much we are loved and to make the way back for us. Jesus takes the things blocking our way and sends them as far as the east is from the west (*turn the person round to face Jesus, add more ribbons going both ways between them*).

All we need to do is turn again, look to God, see what Jesus showed us and believe (*add three hearts in a row between the person and Jesus*).

God loved us yesterday, God loves you today and God will love you tomorrow (*place the compass near the person*).

God is with you always no matter where you go.

Parable

In my hand I hold something very special. Very special indeed. I wonder what it might be. It's not precious in itself, but it represents maybe the most precious thing of all.

I open up my thumb and fingers – one-two-three-four-five – and there it is. A heart.

If I put my fingers on my wrist I can feel my pulse, the measure of my heart beating away inside me, pumping life-giving blood to every part of my body, supplying everything my body needs and taking away that which will harm me. But our hearts represent something else, don't they? They represent love.

In the deepest depths of our hearts we find a glimpse of God's wonderful kingdom.

There was once a person who lived with their sibling in the house of their parent. They worked together on the farm and rested and ate together in the house. But this person was not sure that this life was enough. Surely the world had more to offer, places to explore, people to meet, opportunities to fulfil. They would get half the money when the parent died but they just didn't want to wait. They wanted it now. So they asked: "Please give me my share now, so I can go out and explore the world."

With hardly a backward glance at their sibling and parent, the young person set off into the world with a pocket full of money to ease their way. Spend. Spend. Spend. Spend. Spend. The world was their oyster... until the money ran out. Then things were not so good.

The big spender had nothing left to spend. In fact, with empty pockets and an empty belly, there was nothing for it but to take whatever job was going. That job turned out to be caring for the pigs ... And even the pigs ate better than our good-for-nothing loser. The young person's rumbling tummy seemed to say, "You fool! You'd be better off working for your parent on the farm at home" and that advice seemed worth listening to, so with a heavy heart the young person set out towards home, determined to apologise and ask to be employed as a labourer.

But a surprise awaited our hero. The parent was having none of it. As soon as they saw who was walking down the path, miserable and dishevelled, they ran out of the farmhouse and hugged their child tight. New clothes and shoes, a ring, a place at the table and a celebration "Welcome home" feast – all was laid on for the returning young person. The sibling was less than amused – I've been here all this time, slaving away on the farm to make a good profit for the family, doing my best to be a good child to you, and what do I get? Not even a bit of meat so I can have a BBQ with my mates. And yet this waste of space takes your money and wastes it on parties and fancy living and comes skulking back when he has spent it all, and you do all this for him."

But the parent explained – both were loved equally. One stayed close and lived in that love. But when you love someone and they turn away from you for a while, you still keep them in your heart. You can't help but rejoice when the wanderer returns, not dead but alive, not lost but found.

This story is a parable, a picture story, of course. I wonder what it tells us about God's kingdom.

Campfire song

To the tune of Ol' MacDonald had a farm.

There was a man who had two sons,
Ee i ee i o

One son did stay, and one did go,
Ee i ee i o

With a spend, spend here, and a spend, spend there,
Here a spend, there a friend, everywhere a spend spend,
The young son spends and gets some friends,
Ee i ee i o

And when his money was all gone,
Ee i ee i o,

He also lost his friends, SO LONG!
Ee i ee i o,

With a goodbye here, and a goodbye there,
Here a bye, there a bye, everywhere a bye-bye
And now his money is all gone,
Ee i ee i o.

So off he went to get a job,
Ee i ee i o

To feed the pigs and earn a bob,
Ee i ee i o

With an oink, oink here,
And an oink, oink there,
Here an oink, there an oink, everywhere an oink, oink
Now feeding pigs is his new job,
Ee i ee i o.

Feeding pigs was not much fun,
Ee i ee i o.

He wanted pig food in his tum,
Ee i ee i o,

With a bleurgh, bleurgh here,
And a bleurgh, bleurgh there,
Here a bleurgh, there a bleurgh, everywhere a bleurgh, bleurgh,
Feeding pigs was not much fun,
Ee i ee i o.

He sat and thought, "I must be mad!"
Ee i ee i o.



“I know! I’ll go back to my dad”,
Ee i ee i o.

With a beg, beg here, and a beg, beg there,
Here a beg, there a beg, everywhere a beg, beg,
So off he went to see his dad,
Ee i ee i o.

The boy said “I am sorry dad”,
Ee i ee i o.

“You’re home, you’re safe and I am glad”,
Ee i ee i o,

With a big hug here, and a big hug there,
Here a hug, there a hug, everywhere a big hug,
“You are home and I am glad”,
[Big finish]
EE I EE I OOOOOOOOOOOO!

Wondering questions

1. I wonder where you see God in today’s stories and in your story.
2. I wonder what one thing you liked best from today’s stories.
3. I wonder what you will remember about today’s stories and maybe share with someone else.

What’s your story?

- Can you share the story of a time you felt let down?
- Can you share the story of a tradition your family shares at Easter time?
- Can you share the story of a time when you made a bad choice but someone forgave you?

Small group prayer

Folded Paper Cross

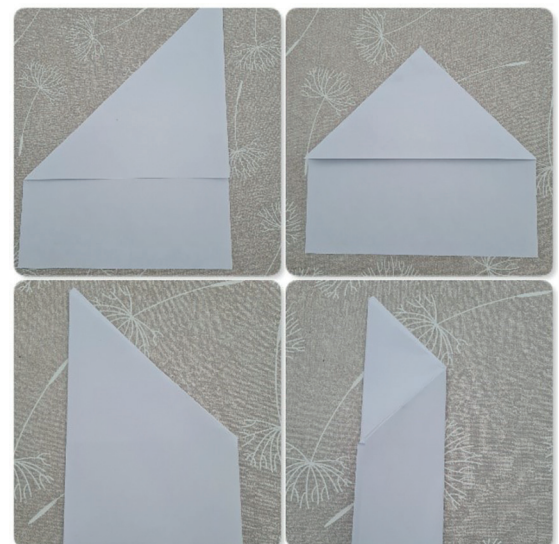
This reflective prayer activity makes a cross from a sheet of paper. It has a real ‘wow’ moment as you unfold the paper and reveal a cross and the word life. As you fold the paper together, retell the story of Jesus dying on the cross and that three days later he rose to life.

What you need:

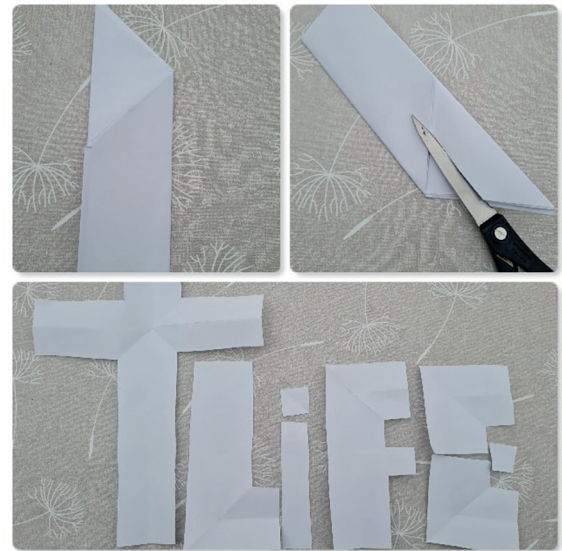
- A4 paper
- Scissors (optional).

What you do:

1. Fold the top corner down to the edge of the paper.
2. Fold the top right corner down, you now have a house shape.
3. Fold in half along a vertical line.



4. Fold in half vertically again.
5. Tear or cut lengthways down the centre of the folded paper.
6. Carefully unfold all the pieces. You will find a large cross and the remaining small pieces can be used to spell the word 'life'.
7. As you sit quietly, just looking at the cross and the words, a leader can say that the cross reminds us that Jesus loves you and me.
8. After a very short time of quiet, someone can lead the children in prayer by saying these words from Roots for Churches:



God so loved the world – and me and you, that he sent his Son – that’s real and true, so we might have life – life without end. Thank you, God, for Jesus, your Son and our friend. Amen.

Activity/craft

Stained Glass Cross

What you need:

- Ready made shortcrust pastry (gluten free if needed)
- Boiled sweets (eg Fox’s glacier fruits)
- Baking tray and baking paper.

What you do:

1. Put the boiled sweets into a ziplock bag, wrap with a teatowel, and bash with a rolling pin to break the sweets into small pieces.
2. Roll out the pastry and cut out a cross shape, cutting a smaller cross shape inside and removing this to create a cross-shaped frame.
3. Place onto baking paper on a baking sheet.
4. Fill the space in the middle of the cross with a thin layer or broken boiled sweet.
5. Cook at 180 degrees celsius for 15 minutes until the sweets have melted and the pastry is golden brown. Allow to cool.



STEM activity

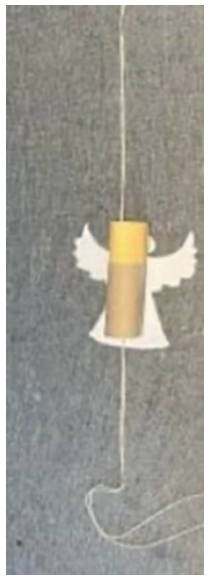
Cardboard Roll Shuttling Rocket

What you need:

- Kitchen roll inner, cut in half horizontally
- String
- Decorations
- An image of a person (optional).

What you do:

1. Decorate the toilet roll. If you want you can glue an image of a person onto it or decorate it to look like a person.
2. Cut two long lengths of string about two meters each, make a loop at each end of each piece of string to create a handle and then feed the two lengths of string through the hole in the tube.
3. Now stand opposite a partner, each holding the two loops of string in their hand. Stand so the string is fairly taut and both start by each holding their hands close together. Position the rocket tube on the string close to one partner's hands. As that child widens their hands apart, watch the rocket tube person move towards the other partner. The rocket tube person can be sent back again by the first partner moving their hands together and the other partner moving theirs apart.

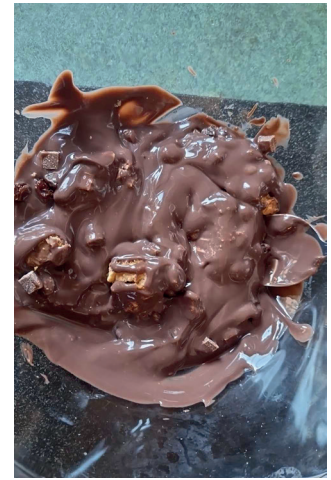


Recipe

Pig Swill

What you need:

- Chocolate or butterscotch Angel Delight (soya milk)
- Raisins/ dried fruit
- Biscuits (free from)
- Shredded Wheat (free from)
- Chocolate chips (free from)
- Bowl
- Spoon.



What you do:

1. Make up the Angel Delight in advance, ensuring that there is enough for everyone to have a generous spoonful. Scoop a generous spoonful of Angel Delight into each person's bowl.
2. Provide dishes of crumbled biscuit, Shredded Wheat into it, raisins, dried fruit and chocolate chips and these can be added to the Angel Delight to taste. Give it a really good stir then eat and enjoy!

Games

Easter Celebration

You will need artificial Easter eggs (chocolate or small wooden eggs could be an example) or a ping pong ball, one for each pair. Players need to be in pairs of similar height. One person in the pair throws the Easter egg into the air and both players need to high-five each other before the egg drops down and the opposite player catches it. Then the second player throws it and the pair need to high-five each other twice before the egg drops down and the first player catches it. They carry on to see how far they can get before failing to catch the egg or doing the requisite number of catches. If children find this difficult, you could go for best of three.

Save Me

This game works like Stick in the Mud. Split the group into two teams. One team is designated taggers and the other players run around the room, trying to avoid being tagged. Once they are tagged, they must stand still with arms out and legs apart. To be "saved" by their team, another team member must crawl through under their legs, without being caught in the process. Then the

player who was tagged can rejoin the game. Play for five minutes and then count up how many players are stationary. Then swap roles and play again. Can the new taggers tag more?

Large group prayer

Prayer Walk

What you need:

- Deep trays – tea trays or new cat litter trays work well for this
- Pebbles
- Large car washing sponges
- Damp soil/compost
- Water and towels.

This prayer walk can be done in bare feet while thinking about the story. You may need a leader to support at each station, especially to help with reading the questions and to ensure that any wet feet are dried to avoid risk of slipping.

The trays are placed in the following order:

Pebbles represent the difficult times.

Which part of the story was difficult for the son?

As you stand on the pebbles, think about things which you find difficult.

Sponges represent the thankful times.

Was the son thankful. Were his friends thankful?

As you stand on the sponges, think about what you are thankful for.

Soil/compost represents the sorry times.

In what way did the son in the story make a mess of things?

As you stand on the soil/compost, think about those times when you might get things wrong.

Water represents forgiveness.

What happened when the son said sorry to his father? What does this tell us about God?

As you stand in the water, think about the way that God forgives us and welcomes us.

Say thank you for the love, forgiveness and acceptance we know through Jesus.

While drying feet after this prayer walk, you could discuss how it felt and what was discovered through doing it.

Collective group prayer for all to share at the end of the walk:

Dear God,

Thank you for walking with us when our way is rough and uneven.

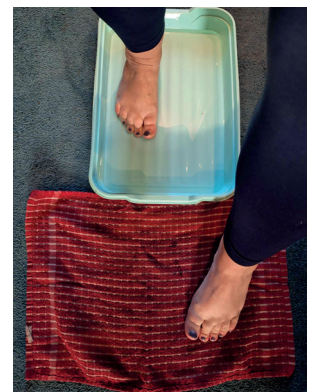
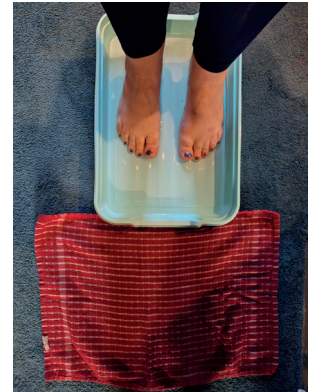
You are with us when we are happy and thankful and the path feels smooth.

When things go wrong and get messy, you are there with us in the mud,

You forgive us and wash us clean with your love.

Help us to walk with you.

Amen.



Jesus commission and ascension



Bible reading

The Great Commission, Matthew 28:16-20 bit.ly/3u2sDoo

Ascension of Jesus, Luke 24:50-53 bit.ly/3OdV7Cr

Parable of the Great Banquet, Luke 14:15-24 bit.ly/491r20S

Bible video

- The Great Commission – Kids Ablaze inc bit.ly/3vHSJxn
- Ascension of Jesus – Loudmouth Pastor bit.ly/48HQkI3
- Parable of the Great Banquet - Kids Hub TV bit.ly/48AfGBb

Arrival activity

Ascension Craft

You will need a paper cup for each person, some string, a paper template of Jesus to colour in, and a cloud shape made of card. You may also want to use some cotton wool. Make a hole in the base of the cup that is just large enough for the string to pass through, then feed the string through. Glue or tape the cloud shape to the end of the string which is outside the cup – you might choose to glue some cotton wool on to make it look more cloud-like. Decorate the cup to make it look cloudlike too. On the other end of the string, glue or tape your image of Jesus. Alternatively you could use a Lego person or pipe-cleaner person and tie it to the string. Now you can re-enact the ascension, pulling on the cloud until Jesus disappears from sight (inside the cup).



Completion of this task could earn campers the “Go out and be” badge.

Story

Jesus calls his disciples

Peter comes in, drops his rucksack on the floor, and sit in a chair with a sigh, putting his feet up on the chair opposite. Mum hands him a cup of tea and pushes his feet off.

Mum: Honestly, Simon!

Peter: It's Peter, mum. Nobody calls me Simon any more except you.

Mum: Peter indeed! You'll be telling me your name's Zebedee next.

Peter: No, mum, that's James and John. They're Zebedee's sons. The SONS OF THUNDER (*in a thundering voice- like a superhero movie*)

Mum: Sons of Thunder indeed! So, you go swanning off with that band of ruffians for three years – and then just walk in as though nothing had happened. We've still got nets need mending, my lad!

Peter: But mu..u..u..m. I gave up being a fisherman to be a fisher of men. That's what Jesus called it.

Mum: Fisher of men, indeed. That Jesus, he's a downright trouble maker, by all accounts. Mrs Fisher down the road, she said that he was egging other young men on to try walking on water and nearly got one half drowned.

Peter: Actually, that was me and ...

Mum: And Mrs Tattler at the hat shop, she said he had called the leaders in the synagogue names and had vandalised the stalls in the temple. His parents must be so ashamed.

Peter: Actually, God his father is pretty proud of him...

Mum: God's his father, indeed! That'll be why he's making up stories like feeding thousands of people with a few tuna sandwiches. He'll get himself in trouble, that boy.

Peter: He did, mum. He was arrested and put to death.

Mum: What? No! Surely not ...

Peter: But it was amazing, mum. Three days later he came back to life. I met with him and talked with him.

Mum: Came back to life, indeed! So where is he now then? Wait, let me guess ... he's a ghost! Oooooh!

Peter: No, mum. Not a ghost. A real live person. Not dead any more.

Mum: You'll be telling me he'll be walking through that door any minute.

Peter: No, mum, I won't. Because this is the amazing thing. We were up on the mountain with him just yesterday.

Mum: Up to no good, no doubt.

Peter: And he was telling us that he couldn't stick around for ever on earth, but would be with us for ever in heaven and through the Holy Spirit.

Mum: I'm not having my son drinking spirits!

Peter: Not that sort of spirit, mother! The clouds gathered around him and ...

Mum: Don't tell me he disappeared in a puff of smoke. You're so gullible. He probably hid behind a rock or something.

Peter: No, as the clouds lifted, we saw him go up into heaven.

Mum: Just his feet sticking down out of the cloud as it went up in the sky like a hot air balloon?

Peter: Well, actually ...

Mum: Straight up to heaven, leaving you on the ground with your necks bent back, gazing up into the sky like you were daydreaming?

Peter: That's about it. He was going back to his father, God, and his heavenly kingdom.

Mum: Heavenly Kingdom, indeed. You sound like you've been drinking the dodgy water. So now you come creeping back with your tail between your legs, hoping for a hot meal and a bed and your old job back with your dad in the fishing business?

Peter: No, actually. I'm just here for a change of underwear and to fill up my water bottle. I'm off again in a moment. Jesus left us with a job to do. I'm a fisherman for God's kingdom, after all.

Parable

Before we begin our story, I just need to open my mail. This envelope arrived, addressed to me, and I just can't wait to open it up and look inside. Is it a letter, a card, a bill perhaps? You'll excuse me while I have a look.

My, oh my, it's an invitation. You are invited, it says. Come and join us. Food. Drink. It's party time. RSVP. What should I answer? What will I tell them? Will I go and join them in their celebration?

Between the lines written in an invitation, we see a glimpse of God's wonderful kingdom. A person was holding a big, big celebration feast. It was such a big, big celebration that this person wanted all their friends and relations to come and eat, drink and party with them. So invitations were written and sent out – RSVP. And the preparations began.

The tables were covered with red tablecloths and laid with the best and shiniest silver cutlery, plates and bowls. The glasses were polished until they gleamed in the light of the candles adorning the tables. Napkins were folded in fancy designs. And the food – oh, the food. Close your eyes and open up your imaginations as you see plate after plate of the most wonderful food you have ever seen being prepared to tickle the taste buds of the assorted guests. Bottles of wine and bowls of punch carried in the hands of smartly dressed waiters. People up ladders fixing decorations, people on their knees sweeping up the tiniest speck of dust from the floor. Everything was ready.

The party-giver was so excited and sent out the message that the party was ready to begin. They sat back and waited for the guests to arrive. But what arrived was a shedload of excuses. I'm too busy to come. I've got other commitments. Something's cropped up and it seems I'm double booked. So so sorry, I can't make it this time. I can't make it. I can't make it. So sorry.

The party-giver was Fu.Ri.Ous! All this preparation and generosity and people were making worthless excuses. They just couldn't be bothered to come. So what do you think the party-giver did?

There was a feast to be shared so a team was sent out. Invite everyone! The homeless people off the street will appreciate the food. The lonely people at the edges of society will appreciate the company. The people struggling with poverty or worry, the unemployed and those who find it difficult to access things because of disabilities – all will find a welcome here.

And so everyone was invited ... Everyone except the people who had made their excuses. The house was full to overflowing and everyone had a share in the big big celebration.

This story is a parable, a picture story, of course. I wonder what it tells us about God's kingdom.

Campfire song

To the tune of 'One Man Went to Mow'.

Each time you add a verse you need to recap all the other verses, so the song grows. After the three examples shared here, the group can begin to add in ideas for how we can go and show God's love and keep the song going.

Jesus said to go: "Go and talk about me.
Go and talk about God's love.
Go and talk about me".

Jesus said to go: "Go and talk about me.
Go and show God's love to all.
Go and talk about God's love.
Go and talk about me".

Jesus said to go: "Go and talk about me.
Help the sick and feed the poor.
Go and show God's love to all.
Go and talk about God's love.
Go and talk about me".

And so on...



Wondering questions

- I wonder where you see God in today's stories and in your story.
- I wonder what one thing you liked best from today's stories.
- I wonder what you will remember about today's stories and maybe share with someone else.

What's your story?

- Can you share the story of a time you surprised your friends?
- Can you share the story of a time you had a special job to do?
- Can you share the story of a time you trusted Jesus or said yes to Jesus's invitation to be his friend?

Small group prayer

Puzzle Prayer

What you need:

- Large puzzle pieces (preferably ones which are plain on the back)
- Marker pens.

Ensure everyone has a puzzle piece. Everyone can use the marker pens to write their friends' names and their own to signify we are all welcomed by God and part of the big picture that is God's kingdom. Encourage everyone to hold their puzzle piece in their hands and to quietly ask God to bless the people whose names are written on their, including themselves.

Now ask them to choose someone in the room (ensure everyone gets one, adults could be included) to pass their piece to and to say "We are all part of God's big picture."

Activity/craft

Invitations

Invites for celebration service/ other groups which meet in the week.

What you need:

- Paper or coloured card
- Pens, pencil crayons, chalks or crayons



- Stickers, glitter, sequins or feathers (optional)
- Key information about the day, time and venue of the celebration service.

What you do:

Each child can design and create personal invitations to attend a follow up service or a group, to encourage friends and family to come along.

Younger children may prefer to use a template or to have the main information printed for them so that they can focus on the design and decoration of their invite. Alternatively, an adult or older child may need to help them with writing the key information.

STEM activity

Party Popper

What you need:

- Balloon
- Plastic bottle cut in half
- String or ribbon to tie the balloon
- Tissue paper cut up to make homemade confetti.



What you do:

Decorate your bottle as you wish. Partially inflate the balloon and tie a piece of string in a bow around the opening, as far as possible from the open end, to stop it deflating. Stretch the opening of the balloon over the small end of the upper half of a plastic bottle. Fill your bottle with pieces of tissue paper torn up to create confetti. Release the bow and watch the confetti fire into the air.

Recipe

Rainbow Wrap

What you need:

- Wraps (free from)
- Mayonnaise (free from)
- Butter (free from)
- Cream cheese (free from)
- Lettuce
- Sliced yellow pepper
- Cucumber
- Grated carrot
- Tomato
- Plates
- Cocktail sticks
- Sticky labels
- Pencil.



What you do:

1. Write name and the words 'I am invited' on the sticky label and pop it onto the cocktail stick before washing hands.
2. Depending on the age and skill of the child either chop up the cucumber, tomatoes and peppers in advance or chop as you go.

3. Place a wrap on a plate and thinly spread it with butter or mayonnaise or cream cheese as preferred.
4. Place some lettuce leaves, carrot, cucumber, tomatoes and peppers in the middle to create a rainbow effect.
5. Fold the wrap to close it and pop in the cocktail stick to secure it. If you would like to make your wrap even more colourful, you could use food decorating pens to decorate the wrap. Eat and enjoy.

Games

The Banquet Game

This is the well known chocolate game. You will need a bar of chocolate on a plate, a knife and fork, a die and three items of fancy clothing (eg a feather boa, a fancy hat, a pair of gloves and some high heeled shoes). Players sit in a circle round a table and chair, with the items all on the table. In turn, the players roll the die. When somebody rolls a six, they run to the table, put on the fancy clothes, then use the knife and fork to cut and eat the chocolate. They must not touch the chocolate with their hands. While they are doing this, the other players continue to roll the die in turn. When someone else rolls a six, the first player must stop eating and take off the fancy clothes, passing them to the new player. Keep going until all the chocolate is eaten. If you feel uncomfortable about sharing knives and forks, you could give each player that comes to the table a fresh set.

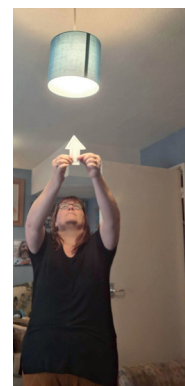
Up in the Air

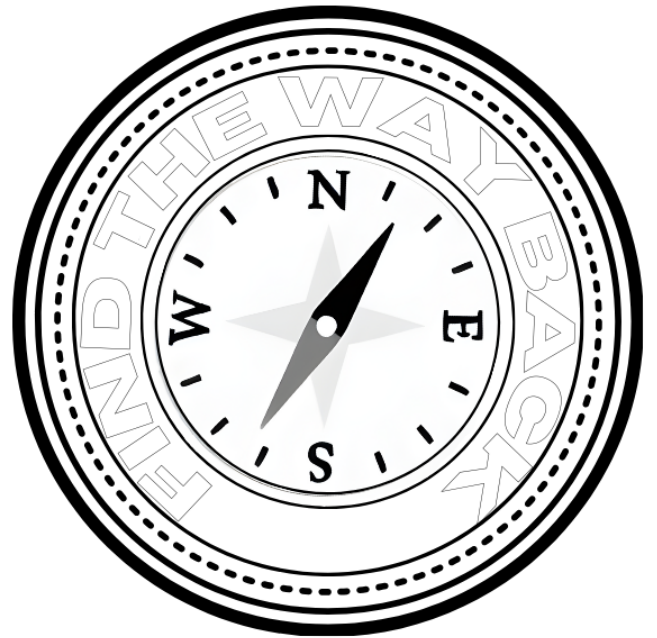
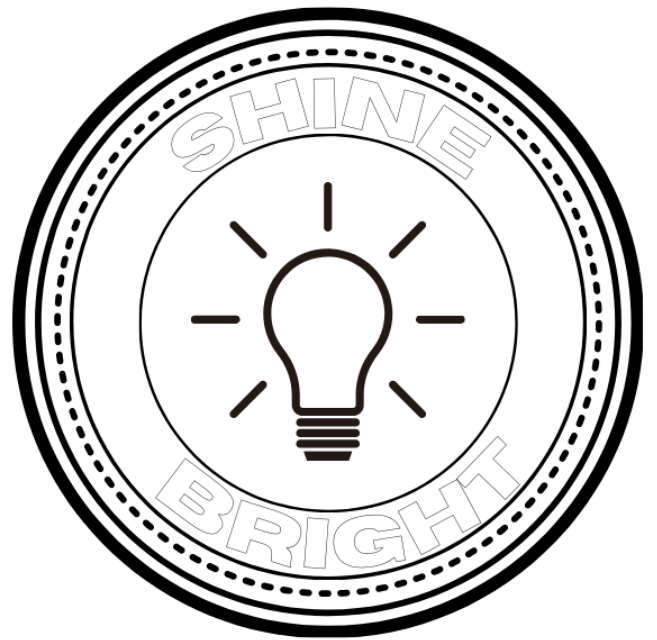
Divide the group into two teams and seat them facing each other, about two metres apart (depending on average age of the group). On "Go" throw a balloon to each team. The aim is for them to bat the balloon so that it passes over the heads of the opposing team and lands on the floor. Each time a balloon touches the floor behind the opposing team, the team gets a point (you will want to put an impartial judge to watch each area and count, then to throw the balloon back into the mix). Once the game gets going, you could introduce two more balloons, then two more again. When the game has gone on long enough, blow a whistle and everyone should stop while the scores are compared.

Large group prayer

Arrow Prayer

1. Form a circle. Either use a finger to point or use pre-prepared paper arrows.
2. Point to the lights and say, "Dear God, shine your welcoming light on us."
3. Point to ourselves and say, "Thank you that you welcomed us, just as we are."
4. Point inside the circle at each other and say, "Help us to remind others that you welcome them too."
5. Turn around to point outwards and say, "Fill this church with your love and make it a welcoming place."
6. Point to the door that leads outside and say, "Let's go out and welcome everyone in your name, Amen".





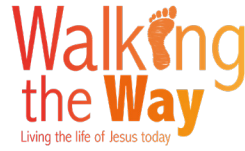


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