

The Clubhouse



2025

Children's and Youth Work Holiday Club materials



The
United
Reformed
Church Children



The
United
Reformed
Church Youth

Welcome

Welcome to the fifth official United Reformed Church (URC) Children’s and Youth Work (CYW) Holiday Club – *The Clubhouse*. Tying in with our theme for the year, **All Are Welcome, we gather in the clubhouse where everyone is welcome and everyone belongs, just as everyone is welcome and belongs in God’s big family.**

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 different 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

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

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Previous materials:

Sparks and Stories – gather round the campfire to hear the Jesus stories

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 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 songs which have been purpose-written for this material as well as links to other songs on YouTube. Clearly it is your responsibility to ensure you have licenses for any music or clips which are not produced by our team.

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 your 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 clubhouse area as well as doing a challenge or 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/ClubhouseHC.

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. Again, you must ensure that you adhere to copyright and licensing guidelines in using these.

Craft



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 or three 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. 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.

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.

Overarching themes and activities for the whole week

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
Song
Game

Small groups (one hour)

Refreshments – recipe of the day
Crafts
Prayer activity
Games

Upfront session two (30 minutes)

What have we learned?
Song
Closing song and group prayer activity

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

About each session

Personnel – the leader of the holiday club is The Caretaker. They could be dressed in overalls or an apron, perhaps, with a toolbox or grip full of keys, scissors, Sellotape, tissues, snacks etc and carrying a feather duster, or a broom, or dustpan and brush etc. Catchphrase is ‘you’re welcome’.

Everyone is a Welcomer – volunteers and children alike.

Decorate your venue

If possible, it would be really good to involve children in the planning of what the clubhouse might look like. Get some suggestions from some of the children who have signed up, if you are able to, or from children involved in clubs and activities in your church family. Central to the decorations should be a door. You may want some easy chairs, beanbags, cushions, blankets, rugs etc. Maybe a TV made from cardboard, a pile of games on a table, comics, console controllers made out of cardboard boxes, a sign saying ‘snacks’ etc. Whatever would make the area look welcoming to all. Again you will want a big poster saying ‘Welcome’ and a sign saying ‘The Clubhouse’.

Arrivals area

The moment of arrival and registration is a really important one. Consider how you can make this area welcoming and how children and their carers will be welcomed into the venue. Especially consider how the ‘unexpected’ child will be welcomed – try to be prepared not to turn anyone away.

Create a poster with various different types of greeting on eg highfive, shake hands, thumbs up, hug, fist-bump, own choice. As children



arrive, they can indicate on the poster what sort of welcome they would like and the greeter at the door can say 'Welcome *name*, it's good to have you here' and give the appropriate greeting.

Have some name plates– rectangles of card with Blu Tack – that children's names have been written on and stuck on the door to welcome them. Remember to have plenty of spares – unexpected arrivals should not feel they were not expected! Also have a big welcome sign, maybe in different languages.

Try to ensure that children are greeted as they enter as well as on arrival. Make this greeting as effusive as the child can cope with (be aware that some children may find a big welcome overwhelming).

Team identity

Encourage each team of children to decide (democratically) on their own team name. It would be fantastic if each team had their own den in one area of the hall. You could use boards to designate spaces or mark them out with tape on the floor. Each area could have cushions or blankets for children to sit on.

They could create their own welcome sign for that area and a welcome mat for the entry to that area. Each member of the team could create a self-portrait to stick on the wall in their den but also have a mirror on the wall so that any visitors to the den also have their face on the wall! Try to encourage the teams to welcome others into their area and to avoid things like secret passwords etc which exclude people.

Ongoing activities

Arrival activities

Each session will have an arrival activity to keep everybody busy from the moment they arrive at the Holiday Club.

Who's at the door?

Invite a different visitor to join the holiday club each day. Examples might be – the minister, safeguarding coordinator, local celebrity, the

oldest member of the church, your MP, a teacher from the local school, a parent with a baby etc.

The visitor stands outside the door. You could use a different sound effect for a doorbell/ knocking etc each day. The caretaker can say 'There's somebody at the door.. ho ho... there's somebody at the door' and encourage the children to join in then shout 'Come in, you're welcome here'.

Each day, one team should take responsibility for being welcomers for the visitor (the first day this should be modelled by members of the adult volunteer team and then children should know in advance if they are welcomers for the following day). The welcomers should open the door, say welcome and greet the visitor effusively, show them where to sit and sit with them, introduce themselves and ask the visitor questions:

- would you like to introduce yourself?
- tell us one fascinating fact about you.
- do you have a favourite welcoming story?
- is there anything we can do to help you feel welcome here today?

Encourage the visitor to stay and take part in the session if they can. You may wish to prime the visitor beforehand so they know what questions to expect.

NB: children who are nonvocal or very shy could use a Talking Tile or Talking Button (eg www.inclusive.com/uk/talking-tiles.html) with 'Welcome' recorded on it to greet visitors.

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:

- create a new way of greeting someone
- find out how to say welcome in a different language
- find a story in the Bible where someone welcomes someone else
- ask someone you know about what makes them feel welcome somewhere

- find out about a charity in their neighbourhood that helps people feel welcome (eg Through the Roof, refugee charities, homeless shelters)
- look at the pictures books you own or that are in the local library and see if the pictures include lots of different types of people.

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.

Continuing craft

If your church uses plastic chairs for children to sit on, they could each have a pillowcase to decorate as a chair cover. You will need to open the seams of the pillowcase or cut the sides half way so that the enclosed part slips over the back of the chair and the remainder hangs down at the back and covers the seat of the chair. These can be decorated with fabric pens or with Sharpies. The team can design welcome signs and mats for the den, make badges with their names on or to say 'welcomer'.

Songs

Sing along video for our original theme song available on the CYW YouTube channel or from children.youth@urc.org.uk on request.

YouTube have very specific copyright rules which dictate who can show one of their videos in a public setting such as a Church. It is always recommended that the owner's permission be sought before using it. You can obtain a license which allows for videos to be used. More information can be found on the CCLI website: www.uk.ccli.com/ccli-news/showing-videos-in-church/

Day one:

Song for younger, *The Blessing* – Allstars kids club
bit.ly/3P3fD8L

Song for older, *I'm So Blessed* – Allstars kids club
bit.ly/3DqJw0o

Day two:

Song for younger, *You are the body of Christ* – Vintage kids
bit.ly/3BymMLj

Song for older, *We are one Body* – Richard Osei
bit.ly/3P4itKL

Day three:

Song for younger, *God Made Me* – Believers fellowship
bit.ly/401yCH5

Song for older, *Who You Say I Am* – Community kids
bit.ly/4frC4PT

Day four:

Song for younger, *Samaritan woman at the well* – Sing Jesus
bit.ly/49QfX4j

Song for older, *Deep Cries Out* – Bethel music
bit.ly/3DoroEm

Day five:

Song for younger, *Ask, Seek, Knock* – Hillsong Kids
bit.ly/4iJRXnp

Song for older, *Song of St Thomas* – P Kel
bit.ly/3P4qa3y

Church service or end of holiday club party

Many churches hold a special service or an end of holiday club party to which families and church congregation are invited, often sharing some of the activities and stories of the week. Think about how you will extend a welcome to the families of the children who have attended your club during the week. How can you make them feel especially welcome in your church family?

Essential things to think about

(See bit.ly/ClubhouseHC for a video version of these).

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 urc.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-good-practice/

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 urc.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-good-practice/. 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/carer 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 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 Widgeit 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

Day one:

Mark 10: 13-15 Mark 10:13-15

Like a car tyre with a slow puncture, the URC has experienced a slow, steady leak of younger people and their families, over the years. It is now not unusual for many of us to have a dusty but hope filled corner in our churches where visiting grandchildren occasionally play. Sometimes there can be the hope that a programme like this can be a 'silver bullet' and have children flooding back into your church. 

Alas, there are no silver bullets, and this includes the excellent resource you have in your hands. Running it will not suddenly reverse years of decline. Instead, you have something better. You have a resource that can invite people into a relationship with you for five sessions during their holidays. From there, you can hopefully build more long-lasting relationships that are about mutual growth and learning. The small people and their chaperones you meet are may be from an alien culture that seems bewildering, unless you have had a lot to do with children recently.

Please note that I have put the emphasis on us learning from those we meet this week. If we carefully read the scripture for today, it is not just an invitation for children to go to Jesus. It was an instruction for us to emulate them. To be open, curious, ready to make friends and learn how the world works.

This is the week's invitation to you – create a bubble between two worlds that often has little to do with each other. Create a mutually beneficial environment where everyone in the bubble may learn, grow and flourish!

Of course, you might shake your head and saying we've got a brilliant youth provision already. If so, give yourself a pat on the back before also seeing that the observations above also apply to you. Hopefully, there will be people attracted to this offering beyond your normal church group. Please learn from them as you reach and communicate God's love in all that you do.

We genuinely hope that this resource is an opportunity to learn and grow together. Relax, have fun, and let Jesus do his work in the hearts and minds of those people attracted by your Holiday Club.

Blessings and Good Luck!

Prayer (which builds all week)
Loving God, help us to welcome all who come this week.



Day two:
1 Corinthians 12:12-27

As a spotty, skinny, bespectacled and unsporty kid, there were many times when I felt entirely inadequate in the presence of my peers. But I remember my flamboyant and rather eccentric High School Art Teacher saying to me one day, 'don't worry about this all now, you're going to be a fascinating adult, and your life will be very interesting'. After the prediction, she then departed in a swirl of perfume and colour.



Of course, I can't comment if all her predictions came true – I'll leave that to people who know me well, but I always remember her encouragement with gratitude. As someone who didn't (and doesn't) always seem to fit in, her promise to me was something I have always remembered, and it told me there was more in life that my limited life experience had told me as an awkward teenager.

Sometimes we all feel like fish out of water. We don't always fit in, and it's sometimes easy to feel insignificant and overlooked. It's important to remember that feeling because there may be young people (or indeed a parent or a fellow volunteer) feeling like this during this week. This may be your chance to be like my art teacher, of blessed memory giving encouragement where it is sorely needed.

Paul writes to the squabbling Corinthians in our scripture for today. He tells those who are giving themselves airs and graces that we are all important. We are wanted, needed, loved and included in the body of Christ- even when we don't feel it or see it in others. It's important that we behave in ways that are inclusive and loving. So please think about how you can reach out to someone this week who may need some encouragement. Think about how you can model the inclusion Paul is writing about. Remember that we are all part of the Body of Christ. May all your words and actions embody encouragement and respect as the week goes on.

Prayer (which builds all week)
Loving God, help us to welcome all who come this week.
Help us to be inclusive and encouraging to all we meet this day.



Day three:
Luke 5:17-26

Let's call our friend on the mat, Matt the Mat Guy. Matt must have been a special person because most disabled people in New Testament times were objects of pity, if not scorn. It was considered that someone who was as severely disabled as Matt had done something wrong to deserve it. Or their parents had been even worse. As such, disabled people weren't so much people as issues or moral object lessons.



But Matt the Mat Guy was more than that. He had friends who were determined to help him. He was a person. And it is with his friend's help that he meets Jesus and is healed. It is important for us to see that Matt and his friends looked at what they needed to do and were ingenious in doing it. Taking tiles off a roof is lateral thinking at its best.

This week we may need to be a bit ingenious ourselves. There is always the temptation to see the person with additional needs as a problem to be solved. Instead, we need to focus on the barrier that is preventing that person from participating and work out how to remove it. Inclusion can't be discarded when it is inconvenient. This week is an opportunity to show that God loves everyone equally. Our values are what we do, not just nice things we say.

I'd like to think that Matt the Mat Guy was the person who came up with the plan, but we don't really know. Certainly, I would suggest that when we are trying to deal with any participation issues, we ask the people who are the experts – the parents and the young person themselves. What, in their experience, can they suggest? And more importantly, what do they want to do?

It often seems easier to try to solve the 'problem' and make ourselves feel better rather than asking what is needed by the person involved and doing what they ask. Let's make sure we

work together and do what is needed so we can all get the most out of the week together.

Prayer (which builds all week)
Loving God, help us to welcome all who come this week.



Help us to be inclusive and encouraging to all we meet this day.

Help us to listen to the needs around us and work together to meet them.

Day four:
John 4:1-26

It is true that Jews and Samaritans hated one another for many reasons, but mostly because they shared a religion that differed in a few details that somehow become more important than their shared humanity. When Jesus thought about the most despised person he could think of, he came up with the Samaritan in the Good Samaritan parable.



We often hear stories and half truths about groups of people we don't understand or have little direct experience of. It's a bit like a stalagmite- little drips of misinformation and misunderstanding creates a pillar of untruth and negative stereotypes. Sadly, it often feels like we haven't moved much further than the people of Jesus's day. If we look at the state of the world, there seems so much distrust and barriers to peace and understanding. We all have more in common than we admit. While we can't necessarily fix the whole world, we can try our best to be part of the solution in our neighbourhoods and our churches.

Being part of an antiracist church means more than just tutting over people we feel are less enlightened than us on matters of race and culture. It means taking a good and hard look at ourselves and recognise that we all have growing and learning to do. It means speaking up and acting when we find there is prejudice, whether it is in ourselves, in the acts of others or barriers in institutions. Isabel Wilkerson, in her excellent book *Caste*, uses the image of an old house to explain being an antiracist. She says

we might have not built the house, but we have inherited it and are responsible for mending it while we live in it. We have the obligation to mend where it is broken otherwise we are passing on the problem to yet another generation.

This week may involve a clash of cultures- anything from not understanding the customs or language of some of our participants to maybe them not understanding what 'our' church culture is and how it works.

Consider this a gift from the barrier breaking Christ who once chatted to a foreign woman at a well. Many people hearing the story of their encounter in the Early Church would have felt that she was very different from Jesus and beneath his notice. But as Jesus shows us in John's account, these cross-cultural encounters are one of the places where God reveals God to us.

Prayer (which builds all week)

Loving God, help us to welcome all who come this week.

Help us to be inclusive and encouraging to all we meet this day.

Help us to listen to the needs around us and work together to meet them.

And welcome all as your children and marvellous creation.



Day five:

John 20:24-29

I always feel sorry for Thomas.

He always gets bad press because he asked for a bit of proof that the disciples were not in some kind of PTSD situation and hallucinated the resurrection. I like to think Thomas as an 'every person'- he stands in for many of us who need more than someone insisting they are right to accept what they are saying is true. Doubt is not a bad thing when it is coupled with openness to explore and the ability to change our opinions.



This week there may have been many reasons for people to have come to the sessions- everything from a budget-friendly way to entertain their children to a parent or grandparent hoping that this is the grounding for a life informed by Christian belief. You may feel you have had many conversations about faith- or none at all.

But even if you don't feel those conversations have been had, you will have been speaking about faith all week. How you have dealt with the inevitable challenges, how you have dealt with a recalcitrant child, or the generosity of provided food and activities will have communicated to those who have participated. All these things will have spoken more loudly to the people who have experienced the week than anything you could have said.

This last session may be the occasion for a little sadness. After all, you have come to the end of the journey. You may not see some of these people again for a while. But hopefully, the relationships you have started to build will continue. Think about what you can offer the people you have met. Is there something you could now do monthly as a way forward? Whatever commitment you make, make sure that it is sustainable long term for you and them. But take this moment to be thankful. Take this moment to celebrate that you have managed to do something wonderful! Just remember now to take a little time to rest and recoup- you've earned it!

Prayer (which builds all week)

Loving God, help us to welcome all who come this week.

Help us to be inclusive and encouraging to all we meet this day.

Help us to listen to the needs around us and work together to meet them.

And welcome all as your children and marvellous creation.

May that our deeds speak of your love and kindness so that your love is mirrored in all we do.

Amen.

