



#



Wise



Words

4



All



# Welcome

Welcome to [#WiseWords4All](#) – a resource to help every church engage with our theme of Wise Words across 2026.

“Wise Words” can be interpreted and explored in many ways, from official documents to animated stories, both intergenerationally and interculturally. This resource is designed to offer many starting places – for worship, youth groups, small group discussions, toddler groups and more, so that you can draw on what best suits your context and needs. There are plenty of resources to use in your church: small group intergenerational sessions, a café church service, games, songs, modern day parables, and even *Kung Fu Panda* – all linked to our theme of Wise Words.

Within these pages you will find ways to explore the particular wisdom of the URC contained in our Statement of Nature, Faith and Order; the Charter for Children; and expressed in our approach to making decisions. You will be challenged to hear wise words from unexpected sources: different ages, different cultures, different media, different places. Online you will find even more resources, including colouring pages, a puzzle page, an intergenerational people bingo sheet, and some mutual interviews to conduct.

Throughout, we encourage you to be **intergenerational**. That’s a long word for ensuring you enable all ages to be full participants in the life of the church. It puts a focus on building relationships across the generations so that everyone is learning, serving, worshipping and sharing life together in ways that are mutual and reciprocal. We need to be close enough to hear and respond to the wise words of other generations. To explore this further, see <https://bit.ly/Regenerational>.

All the contents of this booklet are free to photocopy, to adapt for your setting and to share. They are also available as a download on our website along with the additional resources: <https://bit.ly/URC-all-age-themed-resource>.

URC Children’s, Youth and Intergenerational Discipleship  
(part of the Faith in Action Team).



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Additional resources available: [bit.ly/URC-all-age-themed-resource](https://bit.ly/URC-all-age-themed-resource)

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# #WiseWords across the whole Church

How can we encourage and enable wisdom to be shared across the generations? Many churches run groups for particular ages, such as toddler groups, vintage groups, youth groups and primary aged children's groups. It is necessary and important to have groups which consist of peers of a similar age and who are at the same stage of life. This does not mean that you cannot make the groups or activities intergenerational. They can be intergenerational from a distance if you like.

A simple starting point is to have a theme which is used by all age groups, including your worshipping congregation(s) (If your worship uses the Bible lectionary, then that will be your starting point for deciding themes.) Maybe have a main question which all groups are looking at, remembering the question needs to be as relevant and understandable to a five-year-old as to a 95-year-old. This could be for one week a year or fifty-two weeks of the year. Once this has been decided there are some ways that intergenerational sharing can start:



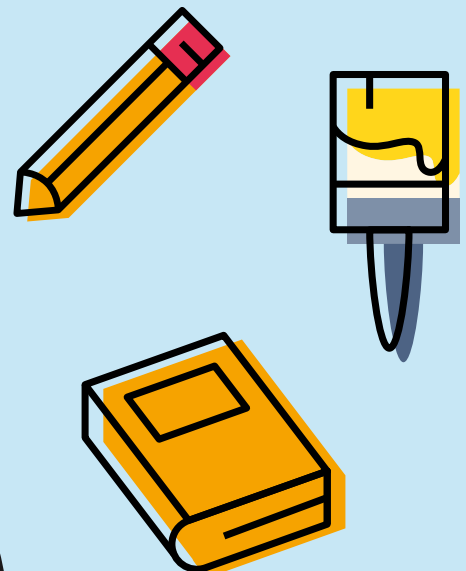
*'One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.'*  
(Psalm 145:4, NIV)

## **Ways to do this:**

- Shared notice board showing how you have all responded to same theme.
- Shared board on which each group adds answers to the main question.
- Feedback reports into the church meetings about how you are covering the theme, how it's getting responded to, and what you've done as a group.
- Groups could take a slot each month in the Sunday service to share. Perhaps there is someone in the group who could record a response.
- Include stories/pictures (with permissions) and items in notice sheet/newsletters.
- Once or twice a year have an open session for all ages to attend.
- Social events which all groups are invited to – have some activities or noticeboards around showing/ sharing what you have all been doing.

**An example: The lectionary for 12 July 2026 is based on Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23, Jesus' parable of the sower. Different versions of the Bible can be used for different age groups. A question to ask is 'How can we grow in wisdom?'**

- **Toddler group** – a craft could be growing cress seed heads or beans in a see-through pot. Sing, 'What noise shall we make to show that God is great?' The story could be re-enacted with small figures. Use a box with a range of items relating to the story for the children to explore.
- **Junior Church** – look at a YouTube clip of the Bible story and explore using games, craft and prayer. You could re-enact story in a combined service.
- **Prayer group** – have a prayer station in a shared space with this Bible reading. Invite everyone to take a leaf shaped Post-it note or card and write or draw something about how they could grow in wisdom. Stick the 'leaves' onto a pre-prepared sheet with stems and trees already drawn onto it.
- **Messy Church** – YouTube of story, crafts based on the Bible reading. Sing 'Faith as small as a mustard seed'. For dinner offer rice and chilli. The chilli can be the soil and the rice the seeds. Have the main question on the table to discuss during dinner.
- **Youth group** – explore what it means to grow in wisdom using wise words of God. Stem activity: create an edible sower's field using marshmallows, coco pops, grapes and more. While eating 'the crops' discuss the main question. End in prayer.
- **Dementia group** – explore pictures of flowers deciding on favourites and saying why. Using a simple map of the area, of even the room the participants are in, ask them to place God somewhere they think God might be. In the style of chair yoga, re-enact the story, throwing the seeds, growing up tall like the plants, withering into a curled-up ball.
- **Craft group** – meditate on the Bible passage for a while. Provide a hardboard canvas and respond to the reading using an array of offered craft materials. Have some wondering questions as discussion starters as well as the main question. Bible study – focus on other questions, not just the main one, but start and end with that one. Have a time of prayer.
- **Sunday Church** – consider having the service in a different format sometimes, for example in café church style or as intergenerational worship.



# #WiseWords from children

## Hearing the voices of children

In 2022, the URC's General Assembly agreed that 'the URC resolves afresh to ensure that all structures and councils of the Church (local church, synod, and General Assembly) are consistently mindful of the voice of children and of the impact of their decisions on the children and future generations. To enable this, all councils of the Church are encouraged to review how they are able to hear and respond to children.'

This reflects statements found in the URC Charter for Children in the Church, established in 1990. This set out ten statements that affirm children as 'equal partners with adults in the life of the Church' and remind us that 'the Holy Spirit speaks powerfully through children as well as adults'. These two statements are only true when children are given the opportunity to play their part and are enabled to have their voices heard and taken seriously.

Children are used to having a voice and participating fully in schools and other settings. The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNICEF 1989, Article 12) states that 'every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously'.

*"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?" (Matthew 21:16, NIV)*

## Why is it important to listen to children?

If your church is committing to engaging with children, it is important to listen to their voices in decision making processes. Put simply, this values children and enables them to know they belong and are equal partners. It allows us to have a better understanding of their views, which can offer a fresh perspective, and it ensures we do not spend time and money on delivering things that children do not want or need. Children often notice things which adults miss. They have views and concerns which can help shape the Church and the world.

Often adults make assumptions about, and decisions for, children without taking into account their thoughts and concerns. In our churches, we need to learn to listen to what children have to say so that they can be involved in challenging and shaping the future of the Church.

## Top tips and resources

There are endless ways of listening to the voices of children and so it is important to choose a method that is age appropriate and best suits your group. For example:

- Using cameras, children can take photos around the church, responding to specific questions such as, What makes you feel safe? What helps you to connect with God? What is the most important part of the church?
- Set up a focus group relating to a particular issue or project e.g. calling a new minister or worker
- Set up a youth or children's forum/council similar to schools
- Have an informal discussion or conduct a formal consultation using surveys
- Have child/youth representation on established committees of the church

- Gather opinions and ideas by using art and other creative medias such as Lego Serious Play
- Have brief circle times within their usual group meetings to share views and ideas
- Through games and play, for example a run-around true or false game, or making choices (run to your answer)
- Small group intergenerational discussion (food always helps)

## The following tools are available to support your church further:

Children and Youth Friendly Church (CYFC) Scheme  
<https://bit.ly/CYFCurc>

<https://bit.ly/Learnlisten> – a tool for developing your churches listening to young people

URC Charter for Children <https://bit.ly/CharterChild>

Voice Activated Methodist tool  
<https://bit.ly/voiceactivate>

Hearing young voices – an approach developed by the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells  
<https://bit.ly/hearyoungvoice>

Compare this statement by a 16-year-old and a verse from the First Letter to Timothy:

*'Don't assume you know what's best for us without our opinions. You don't. Maybe you know what would be best for you if you were a child, but you're not in our minds now, are you?'*

(The Good Childhood Inquiry, published by The Children's Society:  
[www.childrensociety.org.uk/good-childhood](http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/good-childhood))

*'Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.'*  
 (1 Timothy 4:12, NIV)

## Levels of Participation

Step 3 is the minimum point you must achieve if you endorse the UN convention on the rights of the child

### 5. Children share power and responsibility for decision making.

- Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?
- Are there clear ways for children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?

### 4. Children are involved in the decision-making process.

- Are you ready to let children join in your decision-making process?
- Are there clear ways to enable children to join your decision-making process and engage with the outcomes?

### 3. Children's views are taken into account.

- Are you ready to record children's views and share them widely?
- Do your decision-making processes enable you to take children's views into account?

### 2. Children are supported in expressing their views.

- Are you ready to actively support children in expressing their views?
- Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?

### 1. Children are listened to.

- Are you ready to invite and encourage children to speak?
- Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?



## Making the invisible and unheard visible and heard

Consider which voices might be hidden/unheard in your church and be intentional about seeking them out.

Consider whose voices are not being represented or heard in your decision making and consider why they are not heard so that you can begin to remove the barriers and enable them to be heard. For example, you may have children who have English as their second language; you may have some neurodiverse children who communicate differently or could even be non-verbal. Together we are the whole body of Christ and we should ensure that the whole body is taken into account.



### Spotlight on Young Carers

As many as one in five children and young people may have a caring role, so it is highly likely that every church will have some young carers among those they engage with.

Young carers provide all types of care to other family members, usually a parent or sibling, such as medication, emotional support, physical care, cooking, cleaning shopping, help with communication. They may do this well and with a sense of pride in their contribution to family life. However, for some this can become a burden. Research suggests that 20% of young carers spend more than 20 hours a week caring, and nine per cent spend over 50 hours a week.

This impacts the rest of their lives, prevents them from spending time with peers, attending activities, and builds isolation and loneliness. It can impact their education and future prospects and their physical and emotional wellbeing. Yet all of this may be invisible unless we intentionally recognise and support the young carers in our community. The first place to start is listening to the voices of young carers and asking them what support they need. An easy first step is to include a question about whether a child or young person has any caring responsibilities on registration forms and, if so, what adjustments would be helpful for them. Awareness can lead to small changes in practice that make a huge difference to young carers.

My Time charity offers a Young Carer Aware course – ask your CYDO or synod lead for children's and youth work for details.



### Spotlight on Looked After Children

Most churches will have someone with personal or close connection to current or historic experience of being part of families that include fostered or adopted children. The UK government says that 105 children enter the care system every day. This may mean living in a children's home or residential special school but is more likely to mean living with a foster or adopting family. The development of a secure attachment between these children (who are very likely to have experienced trauma) and their new primary caregiver is the most important thing for their future security, and churches can actively support this through their practice.

Childhood trauma has lasting impact on behaviour, relationships, emotions, learning, focus, and long-term future outcomes. Asking open questions and exploring with parents and carers what it would be helpful for us to know and what each child needs to feel safe in any given context will help us find out how we can make church and church activities accessible for each child. Churches can be a key part of 'the village' supporting families raising fostered and adopted children.

Local churches can offer support to 'looked after' children in a wide range of ways. For example: through training and sermons that grow whole congregation awareness and understanding; by giving practical support such as meals, vouchers for days out with children, or self-care for parents; and by adjusting language to reflect that not all families are biological. Above all, local congregations can remember looked after children in prayer and be open to adjusting and changing how they do church. When churches are intergenerational communities valuing every voice, everyone feels welcome and able to contribute.

Home for Good offers information on the support churches can offer looked after children and their families:

[www.homeforgood.org.uk](http://www.homeforgood.org.uk).



# #WiseWords4 the URC - Statement of Nature, Faith and Order

## Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church

There are times when we really need to know who we are and what we stand for. We write 'personal statements' for applications for colleges and jobs. Schools post a motto or mission statement. We decide who to vote for, who to support, which team to join or cheer, even what style to wear, the look we want, the friends we choose. All of these things involve decisions about who we are and what we believe.

When the United Reformed Church was first formed (in 1972) by bringing two separated Churches together (and later, two more separate denominations joined), we had to find some words to say who we were in this new, broader, Church, so that we could express this and hold ourselves to them, and so that other people, and other Churches, would know too.

With the whole Christian Church the United Reformed Church believes in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**The living God, the only God, ever to be praised.**

The life of faith to which we are called is the Spirit's gift continually received through the Word, the Sacraments and our Christian life together.

**We acknowledge the gift and answer the call, giving thanks for the means of grace.**



If you've ever had to put some words like this together you will know how difficult it is, what kind of discussions are needed, and how important it is to get it right! A statement was carefully agreed, and then it was put into a shape that could be read together in a service of worship. It's not a legal kind of text, but more like a prayer or a hymn. Here it is, but with some explaining words next to each section. It's meant to be said aloud in a gathering of people – why not try this with a group and use the explainers to help unpack each section.

The first thing to be said is that we really are part of the whole Christian Church. We are not the whole Church ourselves but are absolutely part of the whole Church, sharing faith in God-as-Trinity, living Christian lives and sharing the Bible and the sacraments (baptism and communion). We may be small, but we are not weird! We are part of the one Church throughout the world and through the centuries.

The highest authority for what we believe and do is God's Word in the Bible alive for his people today through the help of the Spirit.

**We respond to this Word, whose servants we are with all God's people through the years.**

We are a Church that always looks first to the Bible when we want to know what faith really is. AND we know that we need the help of the Holy Spirit to interpret it. We don't think we can understand it without the Spirit to guide us, because the Bible is not an ancient text that just always means the same thing – it comes alive today. And we believe that the Holy Spirit can speak through anyone in the Church, and especially when all ages and all people meet together.

We accept with thanksgiving to God the witness to the catholic faith in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. We acknowledge the declarations made in our own tradition by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Churches of Christ in which they stated the faith and sought to make its implications clear.

**Faith alive and active: gift of an eternal source, renewed for every generation.**

We are a living Church, but we don't think we are just relying on ourselves to be Christians today. We know that people before us have made similar 'statements of faith' and we honour them, those close to us in history and those who were among the first to put the Christian faith into a form of words like this. For instance, the Nicene Creed was agreed at a large Christian gathering in the year 325 at a place called Nicaea. Faith is also always alive and the faith we all share today is part of the story, whoever and wherever we are, renewed in and for every generation, including us now.

We conduct our life together according to the Basis of Union in which we give expression to our faith in forms which we believe contain the essential elements of the Church's life, both catholic and reformed; but we affirm our right and readiness, if the need arises, to change the Basis of Union and to make new statements of faith in ever new obedience to the Living Christ.

**Our crucified and risen Lord, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.**

Here we are saying that we have found an agreed way of being the Church together and we think we are living the essential things, BUT we promise to keep thinking, praying and wondering, and if there is a need to change the way we do or say things then we are willing and ready to change. We are faithful to the past but not absolutely tied to it, and we are always open to God's future.

Held together in the Body of Christ through the freedom of the Spirit, we rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit's gifts and uphold the rights of personal conviction. For the sake of faith and fellowship it shall be for the church to decide where differences of conviction hurt our unity and peace.

**We commit ourselves to speak the truth in love and grow together in the peace of Christ.**

We remember times when Christians have been persecuted for not conforming to what those in power told them was right, and we choose a way of being the Church that allows plenty of room for difference of opinion and for freedom of conscience. We also know that sometimes differences stretch us too far and people get hurt. Everyone in our church should feel safe, respected, and welcomed. So, we know we need to keep on finding a balance in our life between division and unity. That's not easy, but it's part of who we are. Speaking and hearing wise words of truth in and through love helps us keep growing together.

We believe that Christ gives his Church a government distinct from the government of the state. In things that affect obedience to God the Church is not subordinate to the state, but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ, its only Ruler and Head.

Civil authorities are called to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind, and to respect the rights of conscience and belief.

**While we ourselves are servants in the world as citizens of God's eternal kingdom.**

We affirm our intention to go on praying and working, with all our fellow Christians, for the visible unity of the Church in the way Christ chooses so that people and nations may be led to love and serve God and praise him more and more for ever.

**Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is: to God be eternal glory. Amen.**

We are absolutely not a 'state Church' and no government or parliament has power over us. We believe that only the Church can decide what the Church should be doing or saying. We have 'one Lord, Jesus Christ'. We are glad to take part in civic life and government and know how important it is, but if it comes to it, if a choice has to be made, our identity as disciples of Jesus always comes first. This makes us stand out from some other Churches and can be a costly commitment.

We are a Church that began our life as a union of different traditions. The word 'united' is part of our name and we long to see divided Churches finding the kind of unity that makes a difference that can be seen in the wider world. We believe that the God we know through Jesus is all about mending what's broken, bringing people together, and finding deeper love. Our statement of who we are ends with this powerful commitment to unity, to praying and working with all other Christians so that we can be a real sign of unity for a divided world.

The 'sign off' to this statement about who we are closes with giving glory not to us, but to God, who is 'source' (the beginning), 'guide' (with us now) and 'goal' (the future for which we long). We are a Church that wants to serve God's mission in the world. That's what we are here for.

**Does this statement match what you experience of the United Reformed Church?**

**If you were asked to renew this statement today, what would you add or change?**

**What matters to you about the congregation you are part of?**

- Look at the Apostles' Creed and have a go at making this a 'creed for the 21st century' together. What factors did you take into account as you did it?
- Have a go at writing a new statement of faith from scratch. (Please send your final text to the Worship, Faith and Order Committee [faithandorder@urc.org.uk](mailto:faithandorder@urc.org.uk)).

- Can you imagine other ways of 'stating the faith' than by writing or saying a creed?
- How does your local congregation express its faith?
- Think further about the origins of our freedom. The 19th century Scottish theologian P T Forsyth said that ours is a 'founded freedom' – what do you think he meant? Are there limits to 'freedom of speech'?



# #WiseWords4 film fans



## Intergenerational Devotions Using Films

There is wisdom to be found in films – in their images and stories as well as their words. Our favourite wise words may be quotes from much loved movies! Films are a wonderful way for people of all ages to explore faith and spirituality together. They take us to new worlds, spark our imagination, and touch our hearts and minds. Films are a natural leveller, breaking down barriers between generations. Watching together is like going on an adventure as a family or community, reminding us of shared experiences and creating opportunities for connection and bonding.

Stories in films often provide a mirror for our faith journey. They allow us to explore important questions about hope, love, courage, and God's presence in ways that resonate with all ages. This makes films a valuable tool for spiritual formation and intergenerational engagement.

The URC resource *Family Film Nights* ([bit.ly/URCFamilyFilmNights](http://bit.ly/URCFamilyFilmNights)) can help you plan intergenerational devotionals around individual films. It provides a range of elements to help groups prepare for the movie, activities to encourage engagement, 'wondering' questions for reflection, and 'going deeper' questions for those who want to explore their faith more deeply.

Wondering questions can be used simply to reflect on the theme or on ourselves, and they may naturally lead into deeper questions and discussions based on Scripture. Wondering questions invite open reflection, while 'going deeper' questions explicitly connect the discussion to Scripture and faith.

Film 'shorts', each around ten minutes long, are ideal for café-style church gatherings or for use in services. Clips from full-length films can also be shown. In settings where more time is available – such as intergenerational Bible studies, mid-week groups, or Advent/Lent groups – watching a film together and participating in activities and wondering can be a great opportunity for relationships to form, and for faith and wisdom to be shared.

## Tips for Using Films as Devotions

- **Check the rating**  
Know your group. For small children, films with a Universal rating are recommended (PG for slightly older children).
- **Choose films that have obvious and metaphorical threads**  
Don't be afraid to dig deep! Films such as *Up* and *Polar Express* have clear themes to start discussions but look for metaphorical threads as well.
- **Don't be afraid to play**  
It can be tempting to skip the activities, especially if your group consists only of adults, but resist that urge. Play allows us to connect with God in a different way, encouraging childlike faith and delighting God through our engagement. For example, singing, acting out scenes, or creating something inspired by the story can help everyone participate and reflect on the themes in a hands-on way.
- **Ensure you have the correct licensing**  
Check that you have the appropriate licensing (e.g. CCLI) to show films. Make sure the films you select are covered by your license.

Using films as intergenerational devotions is not just about watching a story – it's about creating moments to connect, reflect, and grow together in faith. Whether through shared laughter, thoughtful discussion, or creative activities, these experiences help bridge generations and open up space for everyone to explore God's presence in everyday life. By combining imagination, conversation, and reflection, films can become a meaningful tool to nurture curiosity, wonder and spiritual growth for people of all ages.

If you have any questions or would like to explore using Family Film Night in your setting, you can contact the creators –

Ruth White – [cydo-s@urcwessex.org.uk](mailto:cydo-s@urcwessex.org.uk)

Jess Poole – [childrensministry@urcscotland.org.uk](mailto:childrensministry@urcscotland.org.uk)



## Spotlight on Kung Fu Panda

### Film night

Check that you have the appropriate licensing to show films: [bit.ly/Copyright2025](https://bit.ly/Copyright2025) pages 15-16

**Step 1:** Get ready to watch the film! Have some snuggly blankets, and cosy cushions to relax on. Grab some yummy snacks or, if you are eating dinner, why not have noodles?!

**Step 2:** Snuggle in and watch the film.

**Step 3:** Have a go at some of the activities. While you do, you could have a chat. What spoke to you in the film? Where do you see yourself or God in the film?

### The big question

Oogway, the wise turtle in the film, has many wise sayings, one of which is: *'You are too concerned with what was and what will be. There's a saying: "Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery but today is a gift. That is why it is called the 'present'.'*"

Oogway was encouraging Po to live for today and not to feel anxious or to worry about the future or to let the past stop him from moving forward. Read Matthew 6: 34. What do these wise words tell us about living for today?

### Going deeper

Po is a panda whose life seems mapped out for him. It seems as though he'll spend his life helping his father with their noodle shop. However, Po has a dream, a dream to be a Kung Fu Panda. One day he decides to leave the safety of the shop and go to train as a kung fu panda. At first it looks as though he is not very good at it, he makes mistakes and others laugh at him. Eventually, he stops believing in himself and is ready to give up. It is through the wise words of the wise turtle Oogway that he finds an inner strength he didn't know he had and continues on to be a very special kung fu panda indeed.

Read Isaiah 40:31. These are considered wise words of God. I wonder when you feel like giving up. Whose words give you the strength to believe in yourself?



### Activities

**Fortune cookies** – find a recipe to create fortune cookies, although for this activity they will be 'wise words cookies'. Instead of writing fortunes, write on small slips of paper some wise words and quotes. You might want to use some of Oogway's wise words.

**Panda bowling** – recycle some old plastic bottles into skittles by filling them a quarter full with water. Fashion a panda ball, making and sticking a paper panda face onto a ball. Use this to knock down the skittles.

**Moveable panda** – using the instructions make your own moveable puppet panda. You could try making an Oogway too and acting out some of the film. <https://bit.ly/KungFupanda>

**Paint turtles and panda stones** – you could paint all the characters on individual rocks and place in the garden. Or paint some wise words onto a stone and leave in the streets or park for someone else in your community to find.

### Wondering

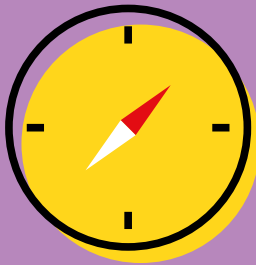
One of the characters in the film, Shifu, has come to Oogway to ask his advice about how to solve a problem. Oogway responds by saying:

*'Your mind is like this water, my friend. When it is agitated, it becomes difficult to see. But if you allow it to settle, the answer becomes clear.'*

How do these wise words help us for future issues or problems that we might have? Where might you now go for advice when you need it?



# **#WiseWords heard together - making decisions together**



*'As the Scriptures say, "Who can know what is on the Lord's mind? Who is able to give him advice?" But we have been given Christ's way of thinking.'*  
*(1 Corinthians 2:16, Easy-to-Read Version)*

Have you ever heard the phrase 'priesthood of all believers'? It is a term that is a living principle within the United Reformed Church and it shapes who we are as a Church.

It has a number of key meanings:

- All believers have direct access to God, without the need for anyone to mediate between us and God.
- Being part of the priesthood of all believers brings a responsibility to commit to prayer, praise, thanksgiving, works of love and efforts towards justice, in everyday living.
- Oversight and care are the responsibility of the whole people of God, and all have a part to play in the Church's life and mission.
- Although ordained ministry sets apart representatives of the whole congregation with specific responsibilities, they are not a separate, higher spiritual authority; their role is to help equip the whole people of God to fulfil their shared God-given task.

These meanings stem from the Bible. In both the Old and New Testaments God calls people to be 'priests'; and through the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus we are shown that we can communicate directly with God.

The URC was formed by different Churches joining together in 1972, 1981 and 2000 (see [#WiseWords4](#) the URC section). In coming together, we needed to agree how we make decisions in church life. In the URC we believe the best way to make decisions is in a conciliar way, to reflect our living principle of the priesthood of all believers. This means we make decisions together, collectively, rather than particular people or roles making decisions. In practice this means we gather people together to make decisions prayerfully in meetings and committees.

The URC has a three-tier structure which should be thought of in terms of concentric circles, or rings in a tree trunk, which is open for everyone to participate in:

1. Decisions about local church life are made at the Elders' and Church Meetings of that particular congregation.
2. Decisions made by the synod (the geographical area including all URCs and local ecumenical partnerships – LEPs) are made at synod meetings and all churches can be represented.
3. Decisions about the wider URC are made at Assembly Executive and General Assembly, the meetings where representatives of the whole URC, including all the synods, gather a few times each year. We also have Assembly committees that help guide the work of the various teams in the URC and they seek to be diverse and representative of our local congregations.

God is at the heart of our decision making and we come together in meetings to discern where God may be leading us. Together with our own reason, we draw upon Scripture, prayer, discussion and listening to each other to discern the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

We allow for all voices to be heard, striving to reach decisions 'by consensus' (which means by general agreement), only voting when necessary.

Our belief in a God who loves unconditionally means we seek to welcome all. All ages can attend, contribute to, raise issues, and speak at Church Meetings. We seek to enable representation from children and young people throughout the structures of the URC and are committed to finding ways for their voices and views to be heard.

In these ways, we seek to empower all those in our local congregations to fulfil their calling to the priesthood of all believers through words and action.

All our work across different generations should reflect this conciliar approach, not just the formal meetings and committees. Children and young people can be involved in decision making by listening to each other and God and working together to understand which are the wisest words to guide them in coming to a decision.

We all need to learn through experience how to listen with open hearts and minds so that we might change our opinions and move our position in the process of discerning together in response to God's prompting. The opportunity to hear different perspectives and experiences enriches this process so everyone has a role to play in enabling all to feel they can speak safely and will be heard respectfully. The lone voice may be the most important one to hear. Finding ways to pray together before, during and after making decisions helps the process to be God-centred.

***Have you ever been to a Church Meeting? If not, why not find out when the next one is and go along?***

***Do you think you would be interested in attending a synod meeting, as a local church representative? Have a conversation with your church's Elders.***

***Have you ever heard of General Assembly? Find out more here: <https://bit.ly/GeneralASSEMBLE>***

***Would you be interested in contributing to the work of a General Assembly committee? Look out for volunteer roles being advertised here: <https://urc.org.uk/jobs/>***



# #WiseWords without words - communication

## Wisdom beyond words

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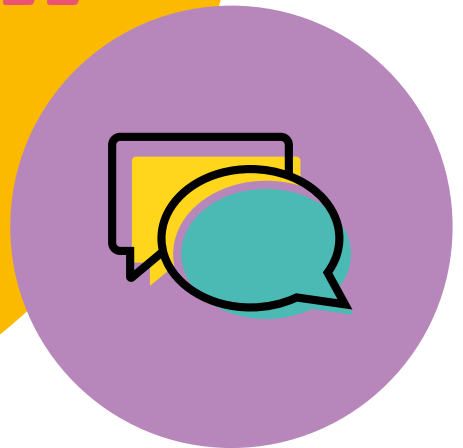
Words can be complicated. The symbols above are actually words in a language other than English. For most people in the UK, the symbols probably appear quite alien if not their first or second language.

**Activity 1** – have a go at copying the words in the box. You may be quite successful in doing so; does it bring you any closer to knowing what they mean?

What about if you knew how to say them? We will help you. Have a go at saying the words: *'man wen jar awem iġan d amiyis d lefhamet? ejj i-ten ad t sseknen s tudart nsen icnan.'* If someone asked you whether you agreed with this statement, would you be happy to say yes or no?

Words are all well and good as long as you actually know what they mean, as long as you can read them or hear them clearly, as long as you have no difficulty with processing language, as long as your vocabulary extends to the words used, as long as they are in your language.

If you happen to speak and read Tamazight, you might well recognise above: ***'Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.'*** James 3: 13. It reminds us of the saying 'Actions speak louder than words'. And so they do; they can transcend the hurdles that language might present and often convey a greater truth. So, Wise Words, are not confined to spoken and written communication.



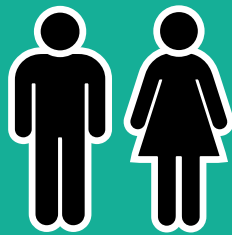
How might we impart wisdom and, equally importantly, open ourselves to receive the wisdom given by God when engaging with those for whom written and spoken language might create a barrier?

**Activity 2** – play a game of either charades or Pictionary, using well-known English proverbs such as 'No use crying over spilt milk' or 'A stich in time saves nine'. Think of a saying and then either act it out or draw it without using words and see if your partner can guess what saying you are thinking of. (Some people might find this harder than others, especially if English is not their first language – it may be good to do this as teams.)

We can convey a lot by gesture. Watch two children from different language groups playing together and you will probably notice that language does not create any barriers for them. They are comfortable with conveying meaning through gesture and shared activity. And anyone who has tried to buy cake and coffee in a foreign country will know that you can achieve a lot by pointing and miming!

What can make this even easier is that there are gestures and images that we have come to be in common use, maybe not internationally but definitely within a country. Some of them are less polite than others, of course, but let's focus on the more acceptable ones!

**Activity 3** – on the count of three, everyone should indicate the following words with a gesture: good – rubbish – OK – good luck – love – telephone. How many of the gestures are the same? Can you think of what the symbols are for



National Trust, London Underground, dead end/no-through road, danger, sunny weather, save (on a computer)? Can you draw them and compare your results? Can you recognise the symbols pictured below?

Signs and symbols which are easily recognised can help convey meaning and, for this reason, although we can communicate a lot just by making it up as we go along, if we try hard enough there are agreed signs and symbols which have been put together such as British Sign Language, Makaton and Widgit (and others) to create a more universally recognised vocabulary. A wise move indeed.

British Sign Language (BSL) is a language in its own standing, with its own grammar and syntax not directly relating to English. It is used mainly by people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment and is the preferred language of thousands of people within the UK. You can learn more about it from <https://www.british-sign.co.uk/>

Makaton is not its own language, instead it is a sign-supported English where signs (hand gestures and facial expression) are used to support the spoken. Many of the signs come from BSL, though some are simplified or modified. Many children now learn some Makaton in school to help them communicate more clearly and confidently with those who have language processing difficulties. Find out more on [www.makaton.org](http://www.makaton.org) It is fairly easy to find a basic Makaton course, either in person or online, but for churches a particularly useful course is Makaton's 'Know and Grow' (<https://bit.ly/mkKandG>), which combines basic vocabulary with key 'church' words such as 'grace', 'communion', 'prayer' and 'coffee'.

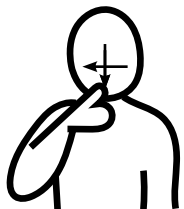
To support the written word, we can use agreed symbols and these can be Makaton symbols or symbols from online programs such as Widgit. <https://bit.ly/WiDgEt>



Grace



Prayer



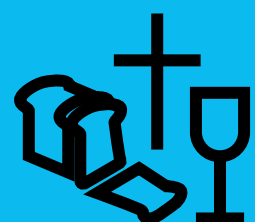
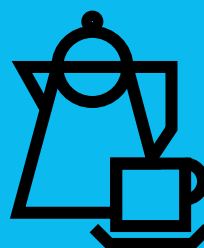
Communion



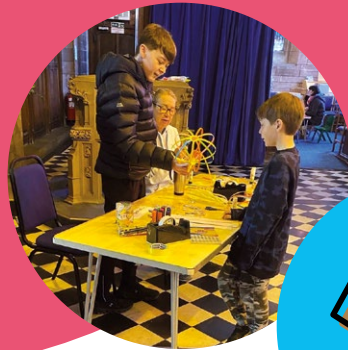
Coffee



**Activity 4** – can you match the Makaton symbols below to the Makaton signs (or actions) on the left? (There's a trick one to catch you out – it's actually the symbol for clever or wise!)



# #WiseWords into actions



**'Preach the Gospel at all times – if necessary use words.'** (These words are attributed to St Francis, not necessarily accurately, but wise nonetheless.) Let us consider how we can make our worship, our fellowship, God's gift of wisdom more accessible to all. It may require some effort but let us show our wisdom and understanding through our good life and deeds done in humility, as James encourages us.

**'Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom.'** (James 3:13, NRSV)

## Lundie Memorial Award

In the URC, we recognise the way young people 'preach the Gospel' in action by giving Lundie awards.

The Lundie Award is named after Robert Lundie, an advocate for hearing and recognising children, young people and their voices. The award creates an opportunity to celebrate a child or young person's contribution to church life, to serving and witnessing the good news of Jesus. Awardees receive a certificate of recognition, a chocolate medal and £100 to use to benefit children and young people as they see fit. You can find nomination forms and more information about the Lundie Award here: [bit.ly/URCLundie](http://bit.ly/URCLundie). So far 69 Awards have been given to children and young people ranging from as young as 4 to 25 years old.



## Spotlight on Games 4All

### Wise words parachute game

#### You will need:

- parachute or, if you do not have a parachute, you can use a fitted sheet instead
- red and green balls

#### What you do:

Everyone should hold the parachute at about waist height.

Place an even amount of red and green balls on the parachute.

The green balls represent the good words we use; the red balls represent the hurtful words we use.

The aim is to keep the green balls on and pop the red balls off.

In life we should only be aiming to keep the green sorts of words.

Alternatively, you can use soft and lightweight items, such as beanbags, small plastic balls or ping pong balls.



### Jenga

#### You will need:

- Jenga set – use big garden version for an intergenerational feel
- Red and green stickers – have more green stickers available

#### What you do:

Place red and green stickers onto the Jenga blocks. Red stickers indicate unkind words; green stickers represent words that build people up.

Play Jenga in the usual way, except ask those present to only remove the bricks that contain red stickers. When the block is removed, change the sticker on it from red to green before placing on the top of the stack.

This game should help show that unkind words bring people down.

### String maze

Use a ball of string or wool to throw from person to person. The first person keeps hold of the end of the string and subsequent people hold on to a piece of it. At the end of the game everyone should be linked with the string/wool. When the ball of string/wool is thrown to someone, the thrower is to shout out a characteristic that person holds that makes them a good/godly friend to others. It could be anything from their smile to being helpful to giving them a lift to the group. At the end, look around and point out all the characteristics that have been highlighted among those playing. A person can get chosen more than once but do ensure everyone does get chosen at least once.





## Spotlight on Games 4All

### Messengers

God speaks to us in many ways when there is something we need to hear. This game involves passing on a message. It is a race. You will need a sheet giving semaphore signs, a sheet giving BSL alphabet, a Bible, pens and paper.

The message to be passed is Matthew 13:9.

Split your group into teams and spread each team out – if you have enough people, it may be helpful to put the team members in twos. The first team member needs a Bible and a piece of paper. Give them the Bible verse to look up and write onto the piece of paper. Then they hand the paper to the next team member. The next team member(s) needs the BSL alphabet and uses this to transmit the message to the third team member(s) who writes the message down on paper as they decode it. They then run the paper to the fourth team member(s). The fourth team member(s) needs a semaphore alphabet and uses this to transmit the message to the fifth team member(s) who also needs the semaphore alphabet. Is the right message heard at the end?

### 'Jesus Says'

This game of 'Jesus Says' introduces the idea that Jesus has wise words to share with us all. It is based on the game 'Simon Says'.

The leader (Jesus) gives instructions. Example: 'Jesus says, touch your nose.' The players must do the action because 'Jesus says' was included. If the leader does NOT say 'Jesus says', players must NOT follow the command. Example: 'Jump up!' (without 'Jesus says') – if a player jumps, they're out or must sit out for a turn.

The game continues until only one player remains or until everyone has had enough.



### Intergenerational quiz

Create a quiz which has questions that span the ages. You may include questions about toys and children's TV as well as music from the decades or films from times gone by. The teams should consist of a range of ages. You could incorporate picture rounds. The winner is the team who answers the most questions.

### First to bring me

Create equal sized, mixed aged teams. In the teams, decide who is the fastest; that person will be the runner. They are to get to the leader as quickly as possible, where they will be told an item to gather. They are to dash back to their team and relay the name of the item. Between them they are to find that item. The items need to be a range of things found across a multitude of ages: a handbag, compact mirror, baseball hat, smart phone, notepad, analogue watch etc.

Once an item has been found the runner dashes back to the leader to be told the next item. The first team to find all items (decided on amount before beginning game) are the winners.

### People bingo

Create a table of questions with traits and characteristics such as: has a brother, birthday is in March, has been on a plane etc.

Each person is to have a copy of the bingo sheet. All those taking part are to mingle and find someone who fits the trait or characteristic. Write their name in the box. The first person to get a different name in each box is the winner!

You can see an example here:  
[bit.ly/URC-all-age-themed-resource](https://bit.ly/URC-all-age-themed-resource)

### Hidden words

Hide a range of things. Ensure some are high, some are low, some are in nooks and crannies or similar. This gives people of all ages the chance to find the items. Consider sending intergenerational pairs off to find the items.

The items may be linked to another activity. For instance, if you wanted to focus on a few words to tie into your activity, the words or letters could be hidden around the room with picture clues. Once found the team/pair can work together on ordering the words or letters.

# **#WiseWords4**

## **small groups – four intergenerational resources**

Intergenerational devotionals are a time people of at least two generations gather and journey in their faith together. These are times when we listen, and learn from one another regardless of age. They are times when we wonder about God as a community, learn about God side by side, and have the opportunity to experience the awe and wonder of God as a shared family of faith. This might be as a household or family, or in an intergenerational small group.

When we speak of being ‘intentionally intergenerational’, it is important to understand that this does not mean ‘dumbing things down’ for young children. Instead, it means simplifying content without losing depth; distilling the message and making it accessible for all ages and abilities. This includes considering the needs of those with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and neurodiverse ways of processing – for example by offering slower pacing, visual cues, or simplified instructions.

When planning devotionals, and to help ensure they are as accessible as possible to every age and ability, you might find it helpful to consider the following:

- Keep them short. Around 15 minutes for a group is a good time to engage and hold the attention of young children and adults.
- Keep to one point. Having multiple points can become confusing. What is the main point/theme of the message? Focus on that one point.
- Think about the Bible translation you are using. Although we may love the poetic styling of the English Standard Version (ESV), it can be difficult for children and people with learning disabilities to access. Consider using translations such as the Easy-to-Read Version (ERV) or the EasyEnglish Bible. Depending upon your group, you could also incorporate your preferred translation alongside these for groups to compare.
- Consider using different spiritual styles to help shape your planning. Spiritual styles reflect the different ways people naturally engage with Scripture and encounter God, through words, emotion, symbols or action. Thoughtfully including these approaches can help people participate in ways that feel meaningful to them. (You can find out more about spiritual styles at <https://bit.ly/rootsspirit>)
- Use ‘modern parables’. For example, story books such as *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney or *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle can help illustrate Christian themes. You might also use films or music to explore themes in ways that engage both children and adults (explore Family Film Nights for ideas – [bit.ly/URCFamilyFilmNight](https://bit.ly/URCFamilyFilmNight)).

## #WiseWords4 small groups 1

### Words that Grow Us – the power of words to bring life

Explore how words can either build up or tear down (Ephesians 4:29).

#### Spiritual Styles

- **Symbol:** Create a 'Tree of Life' with leaves that hold kind or wise words
- **Action:** Write encouragement notes to one another during the devotional. Reflect on how our speech can nurture faith in families and communities
- **Emotion:** Share moments when someone's words helped you grow in faith
- **Word:** Read and discuss Ephesians 4:29 or Proverbs 18:21

#### Questions

- I wonder if you've been hurt by someone else's words
- What were the most helpful words someone spoke to you?
- Which words of God help build you up?

#### Activity

Write the words below on separate pieces of card and also prepare some blank cards for people to write their own words. Explain that words can build us up or bring us down. Choose a word and decide if it is a word that builds up or pulls down. Display the two lists side by side.

#### Words to use

**Well done Fool Stupid Clever Idiot**  
**Thanks Failure Beautiful Ugly Careless**  
**Careful Loving Great Fantastic Selfish**  
**Thoughtful Thoughtless**

When you have produced two lists and added some words of your own, ask people to think about their own experiences.

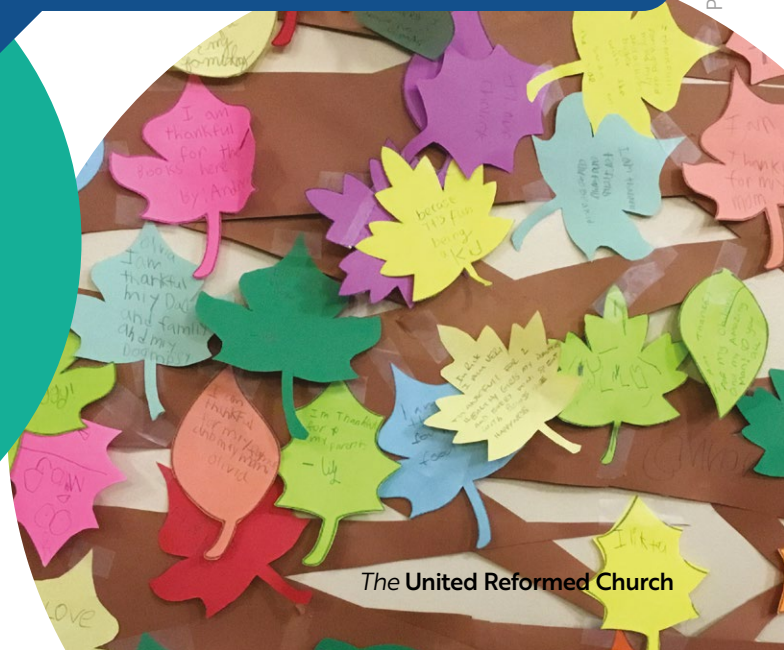
- Can you think of a time when one of these positive words was said to you? When was that and how did it make you feel? Share that with others.
- Now think of a time when one of these negative words was said to you. When was that and how did it make you feel? Share that with others if you can.

#### Prayer

Dear God, thank you for our time together today. We love learning as a family. Sometimes we forget that our words can hurt. Help us to choose our words wisely. Let the words of our mouth be good words. Amen.

#### Takeaway

Are there some wise words you've heard today that you could try to use this week.



## #WiseWords4 small groups 2

### Wise Words of Jesus – the surprising wisdom of the kingdom

Focus on the parables or sayings of Jesus that reveal God's wisdom in surprising ways (e.g. 'The last shall be first'; 'Love your enemies').

#### Spiritual Styles

- **Symbol:** Use simple props to visualise the story (seeds, coins, lamps, etc.)
- **Action:** Re-enact the story together
- **Emotion:** Explore how Jesus' teaching feels. Is it comforting? confronting? hopeful?
- **Word:** Read Jesus' teaching aloud (e.g. The Beatitudes, some parables)

#### Question

- Do any of Jesus' words surprise you? Can you share why?
- I wonder what your favourite words of Jesus are
- Who has surprised you the most with wise words

#### Prayer

Wise Jesus, thank you for sharing your wisdom with us. We love learning as a family. Help us to learn from your wise words and to be a shining example everywhere we go. May we live by your wise words. Amen.

#### Takeaway

*Could you create a new 'wise words' saying or phrase?*

## #WiseWords4 small groups 3

### Build a Wisdom Wall – wisdom across generations

Ask each group to contribute a 'brick' with a wise saying on it (this can be biblical or something learnt through experience).

#### Spiritual Styles

- **Symbol:** Decorate 'bricks' with colours, art, or images representing the wisdom
- **Action:** Physically build the wall or display; this is a tangible act of community and good for under-fives
- **Emotion:** Share what each piece of wisdom means for you personally
- **Word:** Write down meaningful verses or sayings

#### Questions

- I wonder how we could use these wise words in our everyday lives
- What's the wisest thing you've ever been told?
- Are there any special words of God's wisdom which help you?

#### Prayer

Dear God, thank you for our time together today. We love learning as a family. Help us to listen to the wise words of everyone, those older and those younger. Please give us the wise words needed and forgive us when we use very unwise words. Amen.

#### Takeaway

Create a picture/voice note/social media post or similar that will help you share wise words with someone else.

## #WiseWords4 small groups 4

### Taming the tongue – James 3:1-6

#### Spiritual Styles

- **Symbol:** Create something wild and something tame (drawing, playdough, Lego)
- **Action:** Drop small stones into a large bowl of water or stir up water with a stick to see the impact it has
- **Emotion:** 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me' – how do you feel about this phrase?
- **Word:** Read James 3:1-6 in a couple of different versions. Then finish this sentence in your own words: 'My tongue is like...'

#### Questions

- How is your tongue like a fire? How could you stop 'sparks' from escaping?
- When do you find that you say things that you don't mean? (When angry or upset or sad?)
- Is it helpful to try to think before you speak?

Before you speak

**THINK**

are your words

**True**  
**Helpful**  
**Inspiring**  
**Necessary**  
**Kind**

#### Prayer

Dear God, thank you for our time together today. We love learning as a family. Help us to tame our tongue and be mindful of unwise words. Fill our mouths with praise for you and wise and kind words for others. Amen

#### Takeaway

Words are like toothpaste – once they are out you can't put them back in the tube –

<https://bit.ly/toothpasteVid>

Think ahead to this week and who you will meet each day. Make a plan to say something positive and encouraging to one person every day. It could transform your life and theirs.

Photo: © fizkes - stock.adobe.com





## Spotlight on Holiday Fun

With the cost of living crisis and holiday prices rising it is becoming more popular to 'holiday at home', also known as taking a 'staycation'. Some local churches have responded to this by hosting intergenerational holiday clubs and activities for all ages to attend. Here are some of their stories.

<https://bit.ly/Holsathome> this link takes you to a PDF.

### Bulwell URC

Across eight days in August 2025, Bullwell URC hosted a Family Holiday Club which welcomed 36 families, 125 children in total.

There was lots of laughter, singing, story time, sticking, gluing, and time together to explore faith and to build friendships. Many meaningful conversations happened throughout all of the activities.

The church held two focused days. A Community Café served 124 meals, offering affordable food and a friendly space for all ages, helping to support families during the school holidays. There was also a Picnic in the Park, which provided more than eight hours of outdoor fun and community connection. These gatherings built new relationships with families who do not currently attend church activities, and so deepening community engagement. The holiday club also helped to strengthen existing relationships with those already known to the church.

Bulwell URC witnessed children discovering Bible stories for the first time, parents sharing openly about life and faith, and neighbours finding a welcoming environment here through the church's ministry. Some heart-warming comments from those who attended included:

- A child excitedly asked: *'Dave, I love the stories, are we having one today?'*
- A parent shared they were *'so thankful for the activities'*.
- Another parent said: *'I love my children and grandchildren learning the Jesus stories.'*

Do you have a story you would like to share?

Email [sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk](mailto:sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk)



### Shiregreen Tracey Winfrow

Shiregreen URC ran a summer long programme holiday at home for families that included Muddy Church, gardening, cooking, crafting and time spent together.

Before planning the activities Tracey and Andrew were keen to hear the needs of families. They spread out a large sheet of paper on the floor for families to gather round and to write onto it all their needs and wants. It was then Tracey, Andrew and Shiregreen URC's aim to help meet those wants and needs with the active involvement of the families.

After lots of planning they created a programme:

- Muddy Church with access to tree swings, den making, hammocks, fire pits and smores.
- Disco held at Halloween but focused on light which the families helped to organise as well as attend.
- Making of Christmas/birthday cards while spending time in the community café eating bacon sandwiches.
- Coming together of families to bake food and cakes together as well as plenty of craft and play bringing love and laughter.

Shiregreen Church, which at present has 8-10 members of varying ages, made this venture the main focus of the whole church.

This 'staycation' and time devoted to the community opened up opportunities for mission work. The local school welcomed Tracey in to organise and run a harvest assembly. Andrew has been enabled to create a man's wellbeing 'walk and talk'. The Church has also just held their first baptism in many years.

Future plans include, with the help of other organisations and the community they have built up, using some ground owned by the church to grow and nurture their own community garden.

Tracey, Andrew and Dave's stories are very encouraging and show us what is possible. There must be many similar stories out there! Please email [sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk](mailto:sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk) with yours.

Funding is available [https:// bit.ly/CYWgrants](https://bit.ly/CYWgrants)



# **#WiseWords with toddlers**

Parent and toddler groups are recognised as one of the most effective outward-facing missional activities for churches and they create endless opportunities for interactions between babies, toddlers and their parents, carers and the wider community. Often the teams in these groups are made up of all ages – people who have retired who have a passion for families, grandparents who are helping with childcare, and little ones aged 0-4! From the craft table to the snack station, book corner to train set, putting on coats and wiping up spills, the dynamics of these groups are so rich in language and love.

Words are only one way to communicate. There are so many other ways little ones communicate too – body language, facial expressions, mood, touch... These can all convey meaning, emotion, wonder and love. Being in the presence of little ones can enable older generations to express these wordlessly as well. The very youngest display a God-given innate sense to want to reach out and love, take care of, be a part of, and join in with their world whether in the joy or any sadness.

Being around little ones can speak to the hearts of older generations and bring out their own beauty, love and emotions from within. Children can be so delightfully infectious and at the same time the little ones benefit from something very precious in return through these intergenerational relationships. There is a sort of special reciprocity that was always meant to be.



**Practical suggestion:** invite older members of your church/community to the toddler group in your church to just be there. It can be a one-off open play session or a regular visit (this would require appropriate safeguarding checks) – not necessarily having a physical job to do but just to be present. Many of our families have no grandparents close by and the children love having someone else to read to them, show them their pictures or make shapes with the playdough. Keeping your hands busy is as good for the elderly as it is for the children and creates amazing opportunities to be creative and facilitate language.

There is a growing movement of toddler groups meeting in care homes and here old and young alike play together. The benefits for all generations are increasingly well-known (see Channel 4’s Old People’s Home for 4 Year Olds).

Children have amazing ways of sharing wise words. A story from a member of the national 1277 movement:

3yr old: *‘God is busy in my heart.’*

Me: *‘That’s exciting. What’s he doing there?’*

3yr old: *‘He’s tidying up.’*



Actions often speak louder than words, modelled by the children. A story from a member of 1277:

*‘In one of our sessions recently, one of the little ones was upset because another child was playing with the car that he wanted. One of the older children looked from one to the other, and then walked over to the other toy cars, carefully selected one and brought it back to the crying child. The older child is only just three.’*

**Practical suggestion:** Create wondering spaces where children and parents/carers and grandparents can be together. An unhurried space, perhaps outdoors if location allows. For example, sessions in a community allotment digging the soil, planting seeds or harvesting vegetables creates that sense of awe and wonder and opportunities for ‘wise words’ to be shared. Toddlers decorating leaves and these being taken home by older members of the congregation to pray for the little one who made it.

There are so many ways in which different ages can be a blessing to one another. The wisdom is not in the words but in the connections and relationships, the life and love shared between the generations. We will never fully know the impact of this, but we thank God for opportunities to share wisdom and, if necessary, use words.

**1277 Make Them Count** ([www.1277.org.uk](http://www.1277.org.uk)) is a national movement for church-based toddler groups and a hive of information and practical ideas. They offer support to existing groups and encourage people to pray about starting a toddler group where there is none: join the Facebook community <https://bit.ly/1277FaceBook>



# #WiseWords on social media



## Sharing wisdom across generations in our digital spaces

We live in an age where words can travel across the world in seconds. With a few taps, we can share encouragement, outrage, joy, or sorrow – all before we've even finished our breakfast. The online world can be a place of connection and creativity, but it can also become a space where words wound, and wisdom becomes easily lost.

As followers of Christ, we can be intergenerationally wise and share wisdom online in ways that build up rather than tear down.

In Scripture, wise words are described as 'a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones' (Proverbs 16:24). The Letter of James reminds us that the tongue – or, in our modern times, our typing fingers – can both bless and curse. Every post, comment, or message is an opportunity to share something that builds up rather than breaks down.

Here are a few ways churches and families can make this digital wisdom visible in everyday life:

### Try this: Encourage digital storytelling

- **Faith Story Reels:** In pairs or small groups, young people could interview older members about moments in their faith journeys and turn these into short Instagram Reels or TikTok-style clips, titled 'Wise words from our church family', and post them on their church's social media accounts, or use them as written reflections.
- **#WiseWords Challenge:** Invite youth to post their favourite Bible verses or 'wise sayings' from parents, grandparents or mentors, using a common hashtag your church can follow.
- **Families:** Work together to post weekly 'wise words': favourite proverbs, songs, or stories that offer light in dark times.
- **Elders' Reflections:** Invite older members to share a short letter to the next generation, one piece of advice or encouragement. Pair this with a younger person's post in response.

In these ways, social media becomes a modern campfire, a place to pass on wisdom, faith and friendship.

## **Try This:** **Pause before you post**

In the rush and immediacy of online life, wisdom often begins with slowing down. Wisdom isn't only about what we say, it's about how we create space for kindness and reflection online.

### **Reflect:**

- 'What's one piece of digital wisdom you've learned the hard way?'
- 'How can our online spaces reflect God's love more clearly?'

Before posting, we can ask:

- Is it kind?
- Is it true?
- Is it necessary?
- Does it reflect the love of Christ?

These small pauses can turn social media into a place of grace. When we bring prayerful reflection to our words, we remind ourselves that people, not profiles, are at the heart of every interaction.

Adopt and share the URC's Social Media Guidelines and Digital Charter <https://bit.ly/GuideSocialMedia> on your church's website and across its social media accounts.

## **Digital proverbs**

Invite each generation in your church or family to write a 'modern proverb' about online life. Display or share them on social media. Examples might include:

- 'A kind post turns away anger.'
- 'Better to listen twice before typing once.'
- 'Screens may glow, but grace gives light.'

## **Try This:** **Share intergenerational stories online**

Pair up a young person and an older church member to create one social media post together. This could be a short reflection, a memory, or a moment of shared hope. See how much wisdom and laughter can flow between generations when we connect intentionally.

## **Prayer**

Our words have power, whether spoken, written, or shared online. When we use them with care, they can spark healing, hope and understanding across every generation.

The next time you open your favourite app, consider pausing and praying:

*'Lord, may my words today be wise, gracious, and true. May they shine light and share love. Amen.'*

*'May every word we share, online or off, be a thread in God's tapestry of grace. Amen.'*



# #WiseWords *café* church service Proverbs:15 1-4

Café church style worship takes place around tables, with a relaxed feel. It is helpful to have paper and pens/pencils/crayons on tables so people of all ages can write or draw if they wish. Some people find 'fidget toys' helpful. You may wish to have refreshments on tables for the whole time or you could break part way through, perhaps after a prayer, to allow those gathered to get refreshments.

**Table Icebreaker:** 'What's a kind or wise word someone said to you that you still remember?'

## **Call to worship:**

Come, let us gather in the presence of the Lord, the God who teaches us the power of gentle words and the strength found in quiet wisdom. As we enter this time of worship, may our hearts be softened and our spirits stilled, let us come with humble hearts, ready to be formed by the Spirit.

## **Scripture: Have copies of the Bible passage on the tables.**

Take a moment to split those gathered into four or eight and give them a reading order, then read the Scripture. Alternatively, you could ask four different people of differing ages to read each verse.

## **Café Church Talk**

Proverbs 15: 1-4 reminds us that our words are powerful, more powerful than we often realise. 'A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.'

We've all seen this in real life. A sharp comment can light a fire in seconds, while a calm response can settle the whole room. This proverb isn't asking us to pretend everything is fine or to avoid difficult conversations. It simply invites us to recognise that tone, timing, and tenderness can change the entire direction of a moment. A gentle answer doesn't mean a weak answer, it means a wise one.

## **Proverbs 15: 1-4 – International Children's Bible.**

- <sup>1</sup> A gentle answer will calm a person's anger.  
But an unkind answer will cause more anger.**
- <sup>2</sup> Wise people use knowledge when they speak.  
But fools speak only foolishness.**
- <sup>3</sup> The Lord's eyes see everything that happens.  
He watches both evil and good people.**
- <sup>4</sup> As a tree gives us fruit, healing words give us life.  
But evil words crush the spirit.**



The passage also talks about the tongue being a 'tree of life'. That's a beautiful image: something that gives shade, comfort, nourishment, and rest. Our speech can become like that, offering encouragement, calm and healing to people who might be carrying far more than we can see. In a world that often rewards quick reactions and loud opinions, Scripture calls us to be people who speak with intention, compassion, and peace.

So today, as we talk together, let's reflect on the kinds of words we want to plant in our relationships, our homes, and our community. Where might a gentle answer bring new life? Where might a quiet word change the atmosphere? And how might God be inviting us to use our voices – this week – to build others up rather than tear them down? May our conversations today be full of grace, honesty, and life-giving words.

## Scripture Exploration

Ask everyone at the tables to discuss with those around them:

- 'If our words are like seeds, what are we planting in our relationships?'
- 'What does a gentle answer sound/feel like in real life?'
- 'Why do you think unkind words stir up anger?'
- 'What does it mean that healing words give us life?'

Encourage a few to share their thoughts with the whole group.



## Demonstration suggestions:

**Jenga** – Either up front or on tables play Jenga. You might think the odd nasty word wouldn't have much impact on a person. But it does. Remove bricks from the Jenga game to show the 'holes' left behind. You could say a word and start to push out a brick, then say 'Only joking!' and push the brick back in. The structure has still changed, there was still an impact.

**Apple** – Have two apples, one which you have, in advance, bruised. The apples should (hopefully) look the same on the outside, both looking fresh and ready to eat. With the bruised apple, state that you don't like it, it's 'bad', too smelly, or too small, or whatever – drop it on the floor etc. Explain how the other apple is much nicer etc. Then gather them together on the table and slice in half to reveal the bruised inside of the 'bad' apple. Expand by saying that when we use unwise words with people it is just like this apple; we bruise and hurt them on the inside.

## Table activities

Intergenerational activities you might want to have on the table could include:

- **Paper chains** – strips of paper, glue and pens. For those able to write or draw, suggest encouraging words and pictures to be added to the strips of paper and then glued together to create a paper chain. Chains from groups could be attached together to represent how, as a church, our role is in part to build others up, planting words of care and kindness.
- **Brick towers** – using large bricks (like Duplo), build a tower from the floor or table. For each kind or caring word, add a brick to the tower, as we build others up with our words.

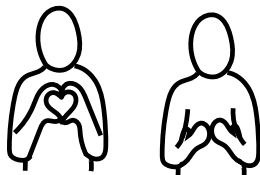
There is a video of this (could be played from 2:52 – 5:04): <https://bit.ly/bricktower>

## Prayers

God of wisdom,  
**action: raise hands above head – reaching up to God**



Open our hearts to your Word,  
**action: create a heart shape between first finger and thumb, then open out like a book**



May our conversations be full of grace, truth, and kindness.  
**action: touch lips and then extend hands outward in a welcoming gesture**



Teach us to use words that bring life  
**action: cup your hands together as if holding something precious, then slowly open them like releasing a butterfly.**



Amen.

Dear Father in heaven, we ask that by your loving spirit we will be careful when we speak to others and only use helpful and kind words. Help us to build others up and when we are spoken to in harsh ways not to respond in a similar way. May our words always be a blessing to others. Amen.

### Final Blessing

May the God who gives wisdom, shape your words with gentleness.  
May the Spirit guide your speech to bring healing and life.  
May Christ fill your heart with peace that calms every storm.  
Go now into the world with grace on your lips and compassion in your steps, that your life may reflect the love of God in all you say and do. Amen.



## Spotlight on Songs

Speak O Lord – Keith Getty & Stuart Townend  
<https://youtu.be/aH1Wn4fTiBs>

Goodness of God – Bethel Music  
<https://youtu.be/n3t6CdeiN1M>

May the Words of My Mouth – Tim Hughes  
<https://youtu.be/rXx4LCGA-aA>

The Fruit of the Spirit's Not a Coconut – Uncle Charlie Songs  
<https://youtu.be/pB2WmMcBNks>

Fun Kids Bible Verse Song by Dingo and Friends  
<https://youtu.be/SxsGuvUlyEM>

Gizmo's Daily Bible Byte by Superbook  
<https://youtu.be/4DWJwogng9A>

Kind Words Song by 123 Andres  
[https://youtu.be/D6x57q\\_WzwM](https://youtu.be/D6x57q_WzwM)

Unwholesome Talk by CCBC Kids Sing  
<https://youtu.be/lZwr1MLHjLO>

Ancient Words by Michael W. Smith – Saddleback Worship feat. Michael W. Smith  
<https://youtu.be/RWLJOIBOeKY>

### Also recommended:

Take My Life (and Let It Be) – Chris Tomlin

Fischy Music: Some Words (From *I Wonder Why*) and Sticks and Stones – Songs About the Power of Words





## Spotlight on Mutual Interviews

A mutual interview is a tool to enable different generations to engage in a deep conversation together, listening and learning from each other. The process is very simple: two people who are part of the same church or community, of differing ages and experiences, take turns asking each other the same questions.

The discipline of turn-taking ensures both have an equal role in the conversation. The pre-prepared questions and structure releases them from having to think about what to ask next and facilitates a deeper listening experience.

You could use mutual interviews in many ways:

- At a church service or meeting, you could ask everyone to find a partner of a different generation to themselves and give them the interview scripts. Allow time for them to complete the interview together, then collect some feedback from the pairs.
- You could ask a particular group of people, for example the Elders or leadership team, to each conduct a mutual interview with someone from the church at least 20 years older or younger than them, and to share their learning at the next Elders Meeting.
- You could invite every child and young person confident about reading questions to find an older person at church to conduct a mutual interview with. Invite them to share their learning with the whole church.
- You could invite all the volunteers who help with children's and youth work to conduct a mutual interview with those they work with, choosing the interview most appropriate for the age-range.

There are some mutual interviews on the URC website to help explore the theme of Wise Words: <https://bit.ly/URC-all-age-themed-resource>. It is important to include the introduction to set the scene, and to invite people to share their reflections afterwards.

If you find this a helpful tool, why not create your own mutual interviews. A helpful pattern is to start with a couple of lighter questions to find out more about the other person; then a couple of questions about life at the moment ('What's a life-giving/not so life-giving thing that happened to you this week?'). Then move onto questions about their experience of an aspect of faith and church life. Offer a Bible verse for reflection on your chosen focus. Give individuals an opportunity to share a story from their experience. Enable them to offer each other feedback and pray for each other. End with mutual thanks.

Mutual interviews have been developed by Valerie Grissom of Intergenerate USA as part of the IYS research project collecting stories of youth participating intergenerationally in acts of service, justice and mission ([www.intergenerateconference.com/iys-project](http://www.intergenerateconference.com/iys-project)). We are grateful for permission to adapt this idea for the URC.



# #WiseWords across the generations - co-mentoring

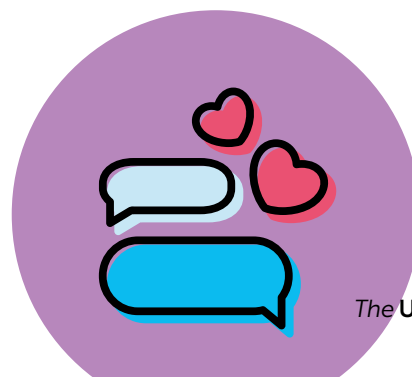
When Jesus was ministering on earth, he called 12 disciples to accompany him. When he sent them out on mission, he never sent them alone but always in pairs. When Paul travelled on his missionary journeys he travelled with companions and intentionally invested in the discipleship of the people he met. His letters are full of personal greetings and encouragements. These examples remind us that faith is formed in relationships – it is not an individual task – something we can find challenging in our highly individualised Western culture.

Churches are one of the few potentially intergenerational settings for many children and young people. We have too easily segregated into age-related activities rather than asking the question, 'How can we learn together as an intergenerational community?' Yet it's across the generations that wisdom is shared and seen. So how can we make the most of this opportunity?

## Be Intentional

Our natural instinct is usually to spend time with those people who are like us with regard to age profile and interests. To enable mentoring to happen between the generations we will need to plan for it. So how could we enable that to happen?

- Support children and young people to ask adults questions about their journey of faith. One church did this as an activity where, as part of being confirmed or becoming a member, each person met with an older member of the congregation to hear from them about what had been significant in shaping their faith throughout their life – the people and the events that had been important. If you have groups for different ages, invite people from the wider congregation as guests for a 'hot seat' spot where they can be asked questions and invited to share stories from their life by children, young people or seniors.
- Include opportunities for conversations to take place between the generations in the services and events that you organise. On many occasions children and young people are seated away from the adults, so consider ways in which groups could be formed that are around shared interests and skills.
- Involve children and young people in all aspects of church life alongside the adults: being part of the welcome team, the worship group, the prayer team, serving tea and coffee. As part of that, ensure that an element of discipleship or mentoring takes place for all those involved in that area of ministry and that everyone is included as part of the team.
- On a regular basis invite people to share what their week has been like with one another – the joys and sorrows.
- Encourage people to share things to pray for with one another and record them so that you can be accountable.
- Develop a habit of asking questions of the Bible passage you are looking at.



## Be Prepared

Once the principle of intergenerational conversations is normal, then you can explore introducing a formal co-mentoring scheme. Mentoring in church settings is about building a relationship focused on spiritual growth, providing support and being a good role model for mutual learning. Mentoring is a way to grow discipleship because it invests in the individuals. It takes place at a time that is mutually convenient and can be mutually transformative.

- Identify a mentoring coordinator: they will need to have good administration skills and an awareness of safeguarding principles.
- Introduce mentoring to everyone. A clear understanding is really important to grasp what is involved and how people can be involved.
- Provide training: mentoring is a skill that can be learned.

For a formal co-mentoring session, it is helpful to have a regular structure to follow as this helps create a sense of safety and security. Elements to include are:

- Prayer
- Catch up on how the week has been
- Bible Study
- Reflection on what is being learnt
- Action to take
- Next meeting

## Be Safe

All activity needs to follow your safeguarding policy and be carried out in a safe way. Since formal mentoring is a one-to-one arrangement there are some key principles to follow.

- Ensure both parties have completed a permission form for the mentoring arrangement. Where one of the co-mentees is under 18 or a vulnerable adult ensure parents/carers are fully informed and give their permission if appropriate.
- Meet in a safe place that has public access. You want a quiet space in a coffee shop or equivalent where you can talk.
- Keep a written record of when and where you meet and any items you discuss.
- Be accountable – make sure that someone in your church leadership knows when and where you are meeting. This may be the mentoring coordinator.
- Don't use social media to communicate – all your communication should be transparent.
- Have regular, for example termly, gatherings for everyone involved in a mentoring relationship for wider social interaction, and include a review with feedback on how things are going for everyone involved.

A retired minister talked to the young people about what was going on in their lives, prayed for them and remembered next time he saw them to ask how those things had all gone. This was informal mentoring that fostered healthy intergenerational relationships.

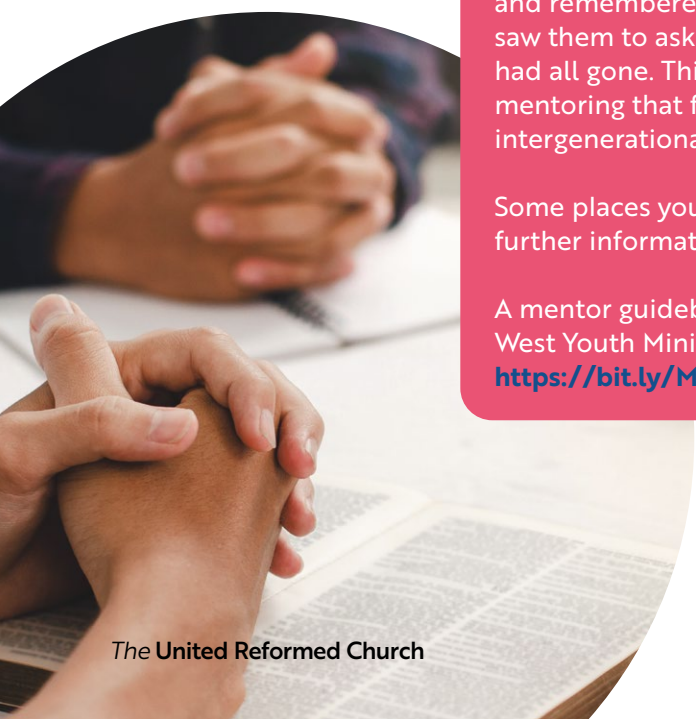
Some places you could go for further information on mentoring:

A mentor guidebook from South West Youth Ministries  
<https://bit.ly/MentorsGuide2>

Salvation Army intergenerational discipleship materials, Side by Side  
<https://www.salvationist.org.uk/resources/discipleship/side-by-side>

Walk with me – an app from Northern Ireland  
[www.walkwithmejourneys.org/](http://www.walkwithmejourneys.org/)

Creative Connections – helping local churches and young adults build and keep connections  
<https://bit.ly/Creatconnect>



# #WiseWords across cultures

## Hearing the wisdom of diverse cultural voices

Wisdom is usually associated with elders, those with many years of experience who can offer us their hard-earned insight. But wisdom can equally be found in the unfiltered observations of the young. It's a child's voice in 'The Emperor's New Clothes' that points out what adult pride and politeness could not acknowledge.

Wisdom is also found in the refreshing perspectives of those from different cultures to our own, whose worldviews prioritise different values and, if we can receive their wisdom, can help us see ourselves and our challenges with greater insight. In Matthew 13:9 Jesus says, 'Whoever has ears, let them hear', but too often our cultural filters can prevent us from hearing wisdom when it doesn't come packaged the way we expect.

## The challenge of power dynamics

In her book *The Culture Map* (PublicAffairs, 2014), Erin Meyer explains that around the world we have varying cultural preferences for the ways we:

- communicate directly or indirectly
- persuade and give negative feedback (publicly or privately)
- approach power and hierarchy
- make decisions collectively or individually
- trust logic or heart and intuition
- disagree productively
- think about time

All of these differences have the potential to both mystify and offend. For example, a child refusing to look at an adult reprimanding them is seen as insulting in some cultures and as showing due deference in others. It is human nature to judge (and reject) those with different values to our own. In our offense or cultural blindness, we will not be able to receive wisdom from others or even create places where it is safe or possible for those different from us to contribute their opinion.

Hearing the voices from children or different cultures challenges the traditional power dynamics in the Church, ideas of authority/leader/host, congregant/guest. Do we truly believe that wisdom is in the body of Christ, spread around the rooms where we meet, or does it primarily reside in the pulpit or the leaders?

- In a multicultural church leadership team, if a white British leader asks for feedback on an idea, some people from Asian cultures may not feel able to openly criticise a decision or idea but might voice concerns in private with another peer.
- In some prayer meetings, the more vocal, energetic, and impassioned style a West African or Latina American participant brings may not be as welcome as a more buttoned-up Scottish voice. The reverse is also true.
- The family that always arrives late on Sundays may be silently judged as uncommitted or irresponsible by those with more Western European ideas about time, frustrating those who want to include those parents on a rota for children's group leaders.
- Without concerted effort, the anecdotes in our sermons or teaching illustrations may reflect primarily a white, western life-experience, and/or the theologians we cite may be predominately male and European. The songs we sing may be predominantly in a particular language or style. Our default structures, traditions, and biases send a message that only some sorts of wisdom and contribution are welcome in our church.





## The sociological case for intercultural church

As our UK urban population grows increasingly multi-cultural (20% of the UK population is now non-white), and the Church in particular grapples with explosive growth from Global Majority immigration (58% of UK immigrants are Christians and want to join a church), how can we hear the diverse wisdom of these voices in our churches, God's gift to strengthen us in our faith and mission in this time?

Although many first generational immigrants may join 'Diaspora churches' because of language or cultural preferences, the second generation and many third culture young people (someone who spent their formative years living in a culture different from their parents' or original passport country) are exploring places where they can express their multiple cultural identities in church.

For young people growing up in a Polish, Chinese or Yoruba speaking church, there is also a missiological case for intercultural church: where can they invite their various British and other ethnic friends to experience church? Would the language and culture of their diaspora churches be a barrier to inviting a friend to explore faith?

## The Biblical Mandate for intercultural church

- Throughout the Old Testament, God's interaction with the people of Israel was to be a light and a blessing to all nations.
- Jesus based himself in the multicultural area of Galilee and many of those he healed were from different cultures to his own. His Great Commission sends us to make disciples of all nations.
- Pentecost did not reverse the curse of Babel by making us all speak one language. Instead, the Spirit's gift of tongues shared Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit with all the languages and cultures gathered for the feast in Jerusalem.
- The Apostle Paul travelled to the ends of Roman empire to share the Gospel with the nations.
- In the Book of the Revelation, we see a crowd of worshippers from every tribe and tongue gathered around the heavenly throne. God is glorified in God's wisdom through cultural diversity.

## How do we welcome diverse voices?

Intercultural Churches UK run a course called 'Strengthening your Intercultural Leadership' and use the acronym CLOUD to highlight ways we can create space for deeper relationships and where diverse voices can contribute and lead.

- **C: Celebrate** God's glory in our diversity. Create times and spaces to share cultural foods, church traditions, and have fun together.
- **L: Learn** to cultivate cross-cultural learning, spot your cultural biases and preferences. Read books and build genuine relationships and ask questions to understand.
- **O: Overcome** prejudice and inequalities that are within your own church or community.
- **U: Unite in Christ:** your commitment to Christ should be our most important connection, be unified by the Spirit.
- **D: Disciple:** work together to make disciples of Christ from all nations. There are good things and sinful things in every culture. How can we see each person and culture reflect God's glory?

The same values that underpin intergenerational church – equality, mutuality, learning from each other, and consciously prioritising the more marginalised voices – will help us in interculturalchurch, to all to grow and see Jesus more clearly.

## Recommended resources:

Take these Intercultural audits to explore your church's intercultural competency.

- <https://bit.ly/Interculturalhealth>
- <https://bit.ly/interculturalaudit>
- Roots resources prioritise participation and interaction, offering opportunities for diverse voices to be heard in conversation and from the front of church. [www.Rootsforchurches.com](http://www.Rootsforchurches.com) or listen to the intercultural series on their podcast <https://bit.ly/RootsPodplaylist>

# **#WiseWords lead to community action**

## **The blind people and the elephant**

Several blind people want to learn what an elephant is like, so they decide to touch it.

One touches the elephant's side and says it is like a wall.

Another feels the trunk and says it is like a thick snake.

A third touches the tusk and thinks it is like a spear.

Another feels a leg and says it is like a tree trunk or a pillar.

The one who feels the ear says it is like a large fan.

The last feels the tail and says it is like a rope.

They all start arguing, each one convinced their own description is the only correct one.

## **The lesson**

They are all partially right because they each touched a different part of the elephant, but their understanding is incomplete because they only have one perspective. To truly understand something, you need to look at it from many different angles, not just your own. It is important to listen to, and respect, other people's viewpoints, even if they are different from our own.

## **What is it to be wise?**

Being clever or having intelligence is often based on facts and figures, or an ability to remember information, and is often based on either being right or wrong.

Being wise, or having wisdom, is about how we use our knowledge. It is about making good choices by thinking carefully. It is about being thoughtful, using other people's experience rather than just what we have thought and done. A wise person is often kind and makes good decisions based on good judgment.

Intelligence tells us that a tomato is a fruit. They grow from a flower into a seed pod. Wisdom tells us not to put it in a fruit salad!

## **Wise words**

When looking for wise words we often turn to inspirational quotes, on a mug or a postcard or a prayer card, or other stuff...

- All our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them
- No matter how many mistakes you make or how slow you progress, you are still ahead of everyone who is not trying
- It is better to be alone than to be in bad company
- Learn to love yourself first, instead of loving the idea of other people loving you

If you had to write one, what would your inspirational quote be?  
(Think of ones you know or write your own.)

## Wiser Actions

Community ministry starts with getting to know people and places, and to understand the area around us. A good place to start is to create a community profile. It builds on what we know ourselves, what we learn from our church and from the other groups and people around us, and what we learn from statistics and other information about our community. We can then put it all together to work out what the wisest actions should be to help our community flourish.

*The wisest action we can take is to listen.*

We've already identified how important it is to be in conversation with others, but sometimes we forget to listen to differences, we avoid a conversation that might cause disagreement, or we are so certain of our opinion that we just want everyone to agree with us. Like the blind people and the elephant, we need to realise that we all have very different viewpoints and we all need to understand all of those perspectives to come nearer to understanding the whole.

Churches often come up with wonderful ideas of what they think is good or needed. They have listened to a sermon or a news report and want to help a particular person or group in need. For example, wanting to set up a clothes bank for asylum seekers. That sounds good, but is it wise?

Being wise asks us to have conversations, to gain from other experiences, to understand what is needed. We need to ask questions and listen to responses:

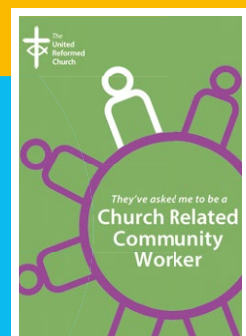
1. Do asylum seekers come here? If so, what do they think about this idea (or do they have other ideas for what would support them)?
2. Are there other organisations that already do this that we could support?
3. Is it something we can actually do? Will we get donations, storage space, volunteers to run it?

By asking those questions of ourselves and others, we can offer to support what is really needed because we have a fuller picture. We must never presume what people want. We must always ask. We are not here to do things FOR people, but WITH people.

The role of Church Related Community Worker (or CRCW) is a particular ministry offered within the United Reformed Church. No CRCW does the same thing. All minister in different settings with different needs. They seek to put wisdom gathered through listening to others into wise action, offering the right support in the right places, for the right people.

*'Community Work is about bringing people together, helping them to identify their own problems and opportunities, mobilising people and resources for change [and] implementing a programme of action.'*  
*The URC Handbook for CRCW and Local Pastorates*

Find out more <https://bit.ly/becomeCRCW>



# #WiseWords from the Charter for Children

## Charter for Children in the Church

(with our simplified version added in red)

Children are equal partners with adults in the life of the church  
Children in our church are just as important as adults

The full diet of Christian worship is for children as well as adults  
Everybody in our church can worship God in lots of different ways,  
no matter how old they are.

Learning is for the whole church, adults and children  
Our church helps everybody keep on learning

Fellowship is for all- each belonging meaningfully to the rest  
Our church is a place where everyone feel and knows they belong

Service is for children to give, as well as adults  
In our church, children can do things to help God,  
the church and other people

The call to evangelism comes to all God's people of whatever age  
God wants everybody to share his good news with others.  
Our church listens and helps us share what we have learned.

The Holy Spirit speaks powerfully through children as well as adults  
People can learn what God wants to say to them through what we  
say and do. Our church listens to children too.

The discovery and development of gifts in children  
and adults is a key function of the church  
Our church helps us find our "thing" and grow in it.

As a church community we must learn to do only those things in  
separate age groups which we cannot in all conscience do together  
Our church gives us lots of opportunities to do things with everyone  
else and doesn't have loads of things which are just for adults.

The concept of the "Priesthood of all Believers" includes children  
Everyone in our church can be equally close to God;  
praying and serving.



You can download a version of the charter here:  
<https://urc.org.uk/your-church/family-friendly-church/>

The United Reformed Church Charter for Children in the Church was created in 1990 and remains radical today. Its ten statements were written in one sitting by the Revd Stephen Thornton 'in a fit of pique' after visiting a particular church. He presented it to General Assembly and later went around the world talking about it – it has been published in 36 languages!

Stephen said, 'It was not written for children – they already understand all these things – but rather to help the adults understand that children are equal partners in the church.' His conviction grew in part out of his own sense of calling to be a minister from the age of eight and the response he received in his church: 'People laughed, asked why I couldn't do something useful like my older brother, and said I would grow out of it.'

In 2004, a set of resources with suggestions for worship and discussion using the ten statements were produced, beautifully illustrated by Neil Thorogood. These are available to download here: <https://urc.org.uk/your-church/family-friendly-church/>

In 2019, a task group of young people worked on reviewing the Charter for Children and proposed this:

## Marks of an Inclusive, Intercultural and Intergenerational Church – 3i Church

### Everyone

Has a story to share

Has the opportunity share and contribute meaningfully

Is respected as an individual

Values the history and faith of the church

Has opportunities to grow

### All

Are willing to listen and learn

Receive from each other

Know they belong to the faith community

Look to the future

Are willing to change

The following questions were created to aid engagement by all ages:

### 1. Everyone has a story to share

- Why do you sit where you do?
- What would you tell somebody about your church?
- What story would you like to tell?

### 2. Opportunity to share and contribute meaningfully

- What do you bring?
- What opportunity do you have to share with your church?
- What do you get from being involved in church?
- What have you learned from others?

### 3. Everyone is respected as an individual

- What makes you different?
- How do you think others would describe you?
- Who listens to you best?
- How do you feel about being part of your church?

### 4. Valuing the history and faith of the church

- What do you think your church can be proud of?
- What changes have been made to your church that you can remember?
- In what ways do you think your church should change?
- What stops change?

### 5. Everyone has opportunities to grow and change

- What opportunities do you have?
- What opportunities would you like to have?
- In what ways would you like to grow as a Christian?
- What opportunities are there for everyone to grow as Christians together?



In 2026, we offer a revised version of the original charter as an Intergenerational Charter:

## We Are the Whole People of God

- We are **vital** to the life of the church
- We **worship** God together
- We **learn** from God and from one another
- We **belong** in this community of faith
- We **serve** and **support** each other
- The **Holy Spirit** speaks to us and through us
- We **discover** and **develop** our unique God-given gifts
- We do things **with everyone**, not just for everyone
- We are not just part of the church - **we are the church**

## Discussion about the revised charter in intergenerational groups

- Which of these statements most strikes you?
- Which one is most true of your church?
- Which one is most challenging for your church?
- Which one would you want to leave out?
- What difference would it make to your church if they had one of these charters pinned up on the notice board and read out at every church meeting?

# #WiseWords4 Faith Adventures

*Faith Adventures* is a free weekly resource from the **United Reformed Church** to support church children's and youth leaders and volunteers as they plan and deliver Bible-based, child-centred, engaging sessions.

*Faith Adventures: Children Together* is designed for those working with under 12's and *Faith Adventures: Youth Resource* is for those who engage with the 11 to 14 age range.

Session outlines provide ways to experience, explore and express faith together through Bible readings, stories, prayers, songs, activities, and wondering together, with a postcard home to enable children and families to nurture their faith in daily life.

Check out the resource here: [bit.ly/FACT\\_resource](https://bit.ly/FACT_resource)





## Spotlight on Modern Parables

Check the rating before using a film clip.

Know your group. For small children, films with a Universal rating are recommended. PG for slightly older children.

### Being Frank

by Donna W. Earnhardt  
(2015: Flashlight Press)

Frank follows the motto, 'Honesty is the best policy.' He tells the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. With a few lessons from Grandpa, Frank begins to understand that the truth is important but so is not being hurtful. A story which nicely mirrors the Bible words for today.



Being Frank illustrator: Andrea Castellani



### Gracie's Ears

by Debbie Blackington  
(2021: Pebbleton Press)

A simple story about Gracie who has hearing difficulties, her world is made a happier place when she gets hearing aids. A great way to explore difference as well as thinking about how we hear the words of God and others.

- *I wonder who or what helps you to hear God's voice and to help others to hear it too.*

Gracie's Ears illustrator: Debbie Blackington

### A Thousand Words

(2012: Paramount Pictures)

<https://youtu.be/N6AxRCP3e4s>

Official trailer. Clip by Rotten Tomatoes Trailers

This film is about the basic message that people should think before they speak and not spout so many meaningless lies.

- *Jesus chose his words carefully when he told stories – are there situations where you are more careful about the words you use?*
- *Are there times (like in the film trailer) where you use more words than you need to?*
- *If you could only use five words to describe yourself, what would you choose? What about one word?*

### Liar Liar

(1997: Universal Pictures)

<https://youtu.be/Clno75lpOiw>

Official trailer. Clip by Rotten Tomatoes Trailers

This film is about a young boy who makes a wish that his dad can only ever tell the truth, and the consequences that follow that wish.

Jim Carrey doesn't have any choice over his words, but we do. God wants us to be honest but also kind.

- *I wonder how we tell the truth without being hurtful to others.*



*'Your tongue has the power of life and death. Those who love to talk will eat the fruit of their words.'*  
(Proverbs 18:21, NIRV)

*"Raise your words, not your voice. It is rain that grows flowers, not thunder."*  
– Rumi

*'For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.'*  
(Proverbs 2:6, NRSV)

*'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practise it have a good understanding.'*  
(Psalm 111:10, NRSV)

*"The wise speak because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something."*  
– Plato

*'For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.'*  
(1 Cor 11: 18, RSV)

Sign up to our bi-monthly newsletter here:  
[www.bit.ly/CYWnewsletter](http://www.bit.ly/CYWnewsletter)

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