

Roots

RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

Jan-Feb 2024
Issue 129

Children & Youth

As the Lord lives...
I will not leave you.
2 Kings 2:2



NEW: Love & Pancakes

Lent resource, pages 6-7

NEW WEEKLY LECTIONARY RESOURCES

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January/February 2024

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Michelle Barnett,
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Welcome to Roots

Key to Spiritual styles: **W**ord, **E**motion, **S**ymbol, **A**ction

Canadian scholar Joyce Bellous identified four pathways of spiritual expression in her books *Educating Faith* and *Conversations that Change Us*. David Csinos, a former student of Bellous, used these styles as a framework in his research into the spiritual lives of children. **WEB** Find more in Worship & learning support.

More resources on the website: Look out for the **WEB** icon in the magazine, which prompts you to access extra materials on our website rootsforchurches.com. Download templates for craft activities, images, dramas, printable Activity and Colouring sheets, Thrive resources and much more. Not a subscriber? Take a four-week trial at rootsforchurches.com/freetrial

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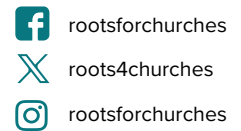
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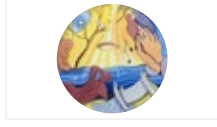

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Editor's highlights



New year, new start! Welcome to our first issue of 2024, we're delighted to bring you plenty of fresh resources and ideas for Epiphany and the start of Lent. In response to subscribers' desire to increase biblical literacy among their groups and congregations, we've chosen to delve into

some of the Old Testament stories and characters – we hope you will relish the chance to shed new light on these timeless passages with your group(s). See **Our journey through the lectionary in 2024** on pages 8-9 for more details. See also **Scripture in context** on page 2, for Simon Jones' reflections on some of our chosen themes for this issue.

As you look to the year ahead, we pray that you will find plenty to refresh and inspire you in these pages. Is God calling your church to set up a ministry for young people? Chris Curtis shares tips on page 3 about how to start from scratch. Don't miss the new **drama** *Not forgotten* [WEB](#) to accompany 4 February's theme. There are resources for **Candlemas** on pages 4-5. And if you're looking for resources for Racial Justice Sunday (11 February), do see our latest **Discovering God: God and racial justice** [WEB](#).

When we spotted that Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday coincide this year, a new seasonal resource was born – **Love & Pancakes**.

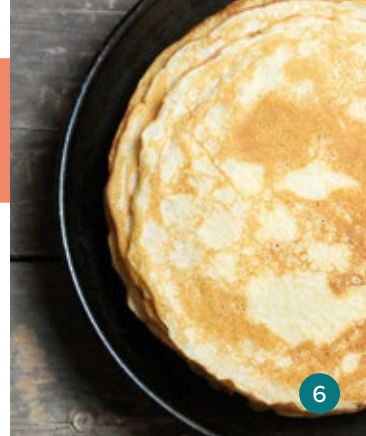
This novel session plan provides fun ways for your children and young people to consider what a loving Lent might mean, see pages 6-7. It would particularly suit an afterschool group, and could be used for an outreach event.

Finally, the Roots team are delighted to welcome our new Adult & All Age Editor, Tracey Messenger, who joined very recently and brings a wealth of experience and much enthusiasm to the role.

With every blessing for 2024,

Pam

Pam Elliott
Children & Youth Editor
Contact Pam at pam.elliott@rootsforchurches.com



Roots is a partnership of denominations and Christian organisations.



28 January – 3 February

How we discern what comes from God

RCL Epiphany 4 Year B: Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; **Mark 1:21-28**

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4-10 February

You are not forgotten by God

RCL Epiphany 5 Year B: Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11,20c; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23; **Mark 1:29-39**

Drama [WEB](#): *Not forgotten*

34



11-17 February

The importance of witness and telling

RCL Transfiguration Year B: **2 Kings 2:1-12**; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

40



18-24 February

God's good news of a covenant

RCL Lent 1 Year B: **Genesis 9:8-17**; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

46



25 February – 2 March

Trusting God when we don't understand

RCL Lent 2 Year B: **Genesis 17:1-7,15-16**; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38

52

The **Methodist Church**



CHRISTIAN
education



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God is in your neighbourhood

Simon Jones reflects on new starts, creation and good news.

The New Year is always a time of fresh starts, making resolutions, putting the old behind us and moving on. This is captured by the Christian season of Epiphany, which all our Bible readings speak into. Three passages in particular speak of the new thing God is doing, and we will focus on them in this introduction. So many in our neighbourhoods – even in our churches – feel God is distant at best, if he’s there at all. Epiphany reminds us that God has drawn close in Jesus, moved into our neighbourhood and is keen to meet us in new ways. Sometimes the Bible speaks clearly to us but sometimes we don’t get it at all; its message is lost to us because we don’t know where the text is coming from and can’t see how it can be speaking to us. So, we’ll explore three of the passages here to see how they still speak to us in our situation.

Does the big bang reduce God to an also-ran?

Genesis 1 purports to be an account of the origins of all things. But it is not a scientific account of how God created everything. Rather it is a rich poetic theology that seeks to give shape to our lives, providing what Rowan Williams terms, ‘the steady backdrop to our faith’. Here God is pictured as the one who is active as the cosmos came into being. The author, probably writing in the sixth century BC, when Israel was in exile, contrasts the God who leads them with the gods of their captors and finds in the God of Genesis 1 a steady backdrop to their faith, even in dark and uncertain times. So, however the world came into existence, God is at work in it, bringing light and peace to those who trust him.

Is the good news of God only for us?

God’s people have always struggled with the thought of sharing their faith with those who don’t share perspective. The book of Jonah tackles this issue head on. Whether it is an historical account or a work of theological fiction, it tells us that God wants everyone to hear about him. Jonah doesn’t share this view. So, he runs away, ends up in the belly of a fish, is vomited on the beach, walks into the city of Nineveh and calls on the citizens to repent. When they do, Jonah is livid. How dare God want others to share the goodness he thought was only for him and his. It’s a reminder in Epiphany that the good news of God is for the whole world and not just for us. The book of Jonah is a witty and provocative push to us to share what we know with our neighbours.

Where is God when we feel abandoned?

Isaiah seems to have been Paul’s favourite book because he quotes from it more often than other Old Testament text. But it is an intimidatingly dense work that seems to have come from three time zones, written by at least three prophets. Chapters 1 – 39 come from the eighth century BC and chapters 56 – 66 from the early fifth century BC. The middle section comes from towards the end of the time of Judah’s exile in Babylon, the late sixth century BC. The people feel abandoned, left to languish far from home. But a prophet comes to inspire hope and urge them to get ready because the tectonic plates of history are shifting, which will result in them going home. And this is God’s doing says the unknown prophet. Far from being abandoned as 40:27 implies they felt, God is coming for them. In the middle of global events that make us feel insignificant, Second Isaiah reminds us that God never abandons his people. They are words of searing hope.

The Revd Dr Simon Jones is senior research fellow (formerly VP) of Spurgeon’s College, London, a writer and Baptist minister.

Starting from scratch is possible!



Chris Curtis considers how there is hope for churches with no youth work or young people.



Many churches find themselves without youth work – or even without young people. They feel stuck. What does it take to keep the few young people you have or even attract new teenagers from the community? It turns out it might be more possible than you imagine.

Royston is a small market town with a parish church right on the high street. When I visit in the spring of last year, it's bustling with life. I'm there to meet the vicar, Heidi, an impressively energetic and pastoral presence in the town. But despite a creative programme for children both on Sundays and midweek, the church remains largely empty of young people. In theory of course, children have a habit of becoming teenagers, so you'd expect a few years of children's work to turn into a youth group – but, like so many churches, that has eluded them. Young people disappear somewhere in the transition to secondary, numbers dwindle and the possibility of starting a group remains elusive.

As past youth work becomes a distant memory to those in the church who've been there long enough to remember, confidence drains away too. Even if we did do something, would they want to come?

Heidi doesn't see things that way – at least there's part of her not yet willing to accept it. Two years ago, she joined a group of 10 clergy on a programme called LaunchPad run by Youthscape (*for more about Youthscape and their programmes, see www.youthscape.co.uk/launchpad*), to think about what could be done. It turned out to be the beginning of something extraordinary.

The first step is for the church – clergy and congregation – to acknowledge the problem, and the pain, of young people being missing from the life of the AAWchurch. An early step for Heidi was to agree that, from that day, every PCC or church meeting would have young people as an agenda item. If there was nothing to discuss, then that part of the meeting is given over to prayer for young people. It's a powerful way to remind everyone of the challenge.

Next, despite the limitations (lack of volunteers, funds, venues, contacts... it's an imposing list) the clergy on the Youthscape course explore three options. We call them *Build Up*, *Build Out* and *Build In*. If you're starting from scratch, one of these is the way forward.

Up is making better plans to help children transition into a youth group. Often that means starting 'youth work' in a new group while they're still in Year 6.

Out is working with the few young people you might have, even if it's just two or three, and connecting with their friends, growing out from those very small beginnings.

In is a missional approach. Getting into the places where young people are every day, making contact in a local school, for example.

Youthscape works with the church leader to understand which is the best option and offer some practical models to get started. It's not always easy, but it's a joy to see more than three-quarters of churches who participate in the programme begin youth work. Confidence returns.

Young people, it seems, don't need churches to be trendy, just welcoming and loving.

Something small is better than nothing at all. And with prayer, these groups can often grow into something unexpectedly life-giving.

Of course, lots of help is needed – What kind of content works? What training do those leading it need? But these are problems that come from growth! Doing nothing at all is a far bigger problem.

For Heidi, over the months of the course, an idea began to emerge. It centred on the older primary children still connected to the church. If history repeated itself, they'd begin to disappear as they approached secondary age. So they decided to start youth group for those 10 and above. Five or six might come at most. Nervously they planned to meet just once a month, and they persuaded a coffee shop on the high street to let them use a section to hold the group. Hot chocolate laced with marshmallows was in plentiful supply. The first Sunday eight turned up, then a few more in the following months. The young people were enthusiastic and more open to exploring faith than anyone had dared imagine. Six months on, the church has started what had seemed an impossibility: a youth group!

A few weeks ago, the young people decided it was time to give their coffee shop youth group a name – and it fits perfectly: St Costa's.

Presentation of Christ/Candlemas

Resources and ideas for events, celebrations, services and more – indoors and out.

What is Candlemas?

Forty days after Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph went to the Temple in Jerusalem for a ritual presentation of their baby to God, as required by Jewish Law. We read about this in **Luke 2:22-40**.

They met a man named Simeon, who described Jesus as a 'light' for all the people of the world. They also met an elderly prophet, Anna, who thanked God for Jesus. Anna recognised Jesus as key to God's plan of salvation for all people.

The Christian festival celebrating these events – formally known as 'The Presentation of Christ' – is also called 'Candlemas' because on this day, in the times long before electricity, people would bring candles to church to be blessed in recognition of Jesus the 'light of the world'. On Candlemas night, many people place lit candles in their windows at home.

Somewhere to start

Here's a way to introduce the theme.

Display a selection of candles – tealights, scented, birthday cake, different shapes, sizes and colours. Ask people to identify them. Can anyone think of other types or uses for candles? Why do we use them? When? Invite everyone to choose and hold a candle and then explain the reasons why they like it. If appropriate, encourage people to light their candles.

Thank you, O God, that you said: 'Let there be light',
and the world was no longer in darkness.
Thank you for the gift of your Son
who brings light into our lives. **Amen.**

Somewhere to finish

Cut out current news headlines from around the world. Stick these onto a large sheet of paper – if possible, covering the paper completely. Cut a large candle shape from coloured card and stick it on top of the headlines. Beneath the candle, write 'Jesus – light of the world' with marker pens or by cutting letters from card and sticking them on.

Lord, light up the path for me wherever I may go,
that I may know your presence,
and be grateful for your love. **Amen.**

Follow-up ideas

- Decorate the base of a candle with tissue paper and light the candle on the evening of Candlemas: <https://easypapercrafts.com/tissue-paper-candle-craft-2/>
- Make little candle cakes and give some to a person of a different generation: <https://www.sainsburysmagazine.co.uk/recipes/cakes/candle-cakes>
- Watch a video of the *Song of Simeon*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-53wzYwzGY>



Daisy Barnes

Something from the Bible

Luke 2:22-40

This is the last of the stories about Jesus as a baby in the Bible. It is read 40 days after Christmas, echoing that this is how long after his birth, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple for a purification ritual required by Jewish Law. What makes the occasion unique is that a man called Simeon recognises in the baby Jesus, the coming of the long-awaited Messiah, and the Saviour of the world.

A read and share idea

Light a candle, torch or lantern at appropriate moments in the story (12 in all), saying: Here is a light for Jesus. Here are lights for Joseph and Mary. This one lights them to Jerusalem. Here are lights for the Law and the Temple. These are lights for Simeon and the Holy Spirit. Here is a light for the Gentiles, and one for the falling and rising. Here is a light for Anna. And this one lights the family home.

What could we learn from this passage?

Simeon looks back into Jewish history and the promises God made to his people; but he also looks 'forward to the consolation of Israel'. Are you more oriented to look back or look forward? What does God want to remind you of? What does God want you to look forward to?

Simeon's words to Mary warn that the gift of the Messiah comes with complications – it will shake things up and bring anguish as well as joy. What examples are there in your life of things that have this double effect?

Explore... Candlemas

Choose from these activities to help people explore the theme. Use the spiritual styles indicated by the coloured letters (see Spiritual styles key on the inside front cover) to help you plan and cater for the different ways in which people connect with God.

Craft activity

You will need: candle design template (see [WEB](#)), printed on white or pale yellow A4 card; crayons or paint.

- Cut each card in half and fold along the dotted line. Colour the flames in rainbow colours – it will give the effect of light passing through a prism.
- Write a message inside such as: 'A greeting at Candlemas bringing you light and blessing'. Or you could write the words of the prayer of thanksgiving (below).

Musical activities

Listen to:

- 'Simeon's Song' by Tommy Walker: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHP-mMZVwUo>
- 'Light of the World' by Lauren Daigle: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cLhaZIBSpo

Or, join together and sing:

- 'When to the Temple, six weeks young' (WGRG, HSNW 76): <https://www.ionabooks.com/when-to-the-Temple/>
- 'When Jesus Christ was eight days old' (Michael Perry – in *Singing to God*) https://jubilate.co.uk/songs/when_jesus_christ_was_eight_days_old

Intergenerational activity

- Set up four stations, for four parts of the story: waiting, seeing, blessing, thanking. Invite people to visit each station, spending as little or as much time as they wish at each one.

1. Waiting

You will need: roll of paper, pens, images of big events from the last century.

- Roll out a long strip of paper to make a timeline, marking on it decades from the 1920s to the 2020s and beyond. Provide images of big events and news stories from the last 100 years for people to add to the appropriate place (include some local stories if possible) along the timeline.
- Encourage people to mark on the timeline their birth or significant moments in their life or that of the community/church, and to share stories with other generations present, about things they remember happening. Invite people to write their hopes for the future. Where is God in the waiting and hoping?

2. Seeing

You will need: images that can be seen in more than one way, such as the classic 'candlestick or two faces?' <https://www.optical-illusionist.com/category/double-meanings/>; the painting 'The Presentation in the Temple' by Alvaro Pirez: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437298>

- Display some double meaning images, and ask: What do you see? Are the images one, or the other, or both?



- Then display the Pirez painting, asking again: What do you see? Add some commentary: 'Mary and Joseph saw two elderly prophets who bless their baby. Simeon and Anna see an infant who is the anointed one of God (Messiah). What do you see in Jesus? What do you see in those who are younger and older than you?'

3. Blessing

You will need: cards with a simple printed blessing (e.g. 'Go in peace and be light to the world.')

- Simeon blessed Mary, Joseph and Jesus. Invite people to take a card and to read it as a blessing to someone older or younger than them; give their chosen person the card and ask them to do the same, setting up a chain reaction of blessing.

4. Thanking

You will need: candles of different sizes.

- Elderly Anna gave thanks for the child. Encourage people to think of someone from a different generation who is a blessing to them, and invite them to light a candle in thanksgiving.

Prayer in the Celtic style

This could be spoken during a procession or while candles are being lit. Each line could be followed by a response such as: **Lighten our darkness.**

As we light/carry our candles, light in our hearts a flame of love for all we meet this day.

As we light our candles, light in us a flame of love for family, friends and neighbours.

As we light our candles, light in us a flame of love for people near and far, friend or enemy.

We light/carry our candles in the presence of our creator, who separated the light from the darkness.

We light/carry our candles in the presence of the Son, who is the light of the world.

We light/carry our candles in the presence of the Holy Spirit, with us at all times and in all places.

Additional resources on the [WEB](#): **prayers of intercession, Celebrating Candlemas outdoors, and A Candlemas outdoor community refugee event.**



Love & Pancakes



Encourage children and young people to find out more about Lent and Jesus' love for us. The activities can form a 60-minute session for under 5s, primary school-aged children or young people. To run an intergenerational event, select a range of activities.

Before you start, check you meet health and hygiene requirements and complete risk assessments for activities.

During each craft activity, aim to make intentional time for conversations. As you sit and create together, talk about how everyone can experience the love of Jesus and consider how they might share this love with others.

Don't forget to make and eat pancakes during your session. See **WEB** for pancake recipes, including gluten-free and dairy-free versions.

Share the Word

For all three age groups, **Share the Word** is the same. Use the following words, adding the Bible readings and displaying the items in brackets. 'I wonder...' questions are a time for everyone to reflect.

This is a busy week with lots of special feast days – let's explore a little more about each of these...

On Tuesday it's **Shrove Tuesday**, or **Pancake Day**. (*lay out pancake ingredients*)

There are no pancakes in the Bible! But, Shrove Tuesday marks the beginning of Lent, the period

leading up to Easter. In the past, people would fast from foods such as fat, butter and eggs during Lent, as a reminder that Jesus fasted in the wilderness for 40 days and nights before his ministry began.

Read Matthew 4.1-11 (or see **WEB**).

Pancakes were a delicious and fun way to use up all these foods.

- I wonder what good things you want to thank God for?

Then it's **Ash Wednesday**, the official start of Lent, and a time when fasting begins. Ash Wednesday is so called because palm branches are burned and their ashes used to mark a cross on people's foreheads as a sign of saying sorry to God.

(*draw a large cross, onto paper, with ash*)

- I wonder what you want to say sorry to God for?

This year, Ash Wednesday falls on the 14 February – **Valentine's Day** – a day that is all about love (*add a large heart shape*). Jesus was clear about how important love is – love for each other and love for God.

Read Mark 12.28-34 (or see **WEB**).

What better time to think about love, about Jesus' love for us and for others, than at the start of Lent?

- I wonder how you know that Jesus loves you?

Under 5s



Gather

Create a **Shrove Tuesday** invitation to play.

Lay out an egg box with toy eggs, toy frying pans, plates and cutlery, yellow felt pancakes, red pom-poms for strawberries, yellow pom-poms for lemons and an empty milk carton.

Share the Word (see above)

Explore and respond



Make

Cut out a large round cardboard pancake and place round it glue, shiny shapes, ribbon, pom-poms and other craft items. Draw a heart outline on the pancake and explain that you are going to think about Jesus' love while you decorate the heart.

Game

Create a **Treasure hunt** to find all the elements needed to make pancakes.

Hide a bag of flour, an egg box, salt, milk, a bowl, a whisk, and a non-stick frying pan. Encourage the children to hunt and bring back the pancake items until you have everything you need. You are now ready to make pancakes as you think about Jesus' love.

Pray

Take a pancake (made earlier during **Game**), and ask the children to squirt lemon juice on. Pray:

Jesus, sometimes things can be difficult, but we know you are always with us.


(*ask the children to sprinkle sugar over the pancake*) Pray:

Jesus, sometimes life can be great, and we know you are always with us. **Amen.**

Enjoy eating the pancakes together.

Love into Lent

Provide everyone with a copy of the **Love & Pancakes** activity sheet (see **WEB**) and talk with the children about how they could show love to others during Lent. Could they do one thing each week? Ask them to decorate one of the hearts on their sheet each time they do an act of love.



Children

Gather

Mark out a large bar chart with five columns, using chalk or string, with which to record the children's favourite pancake toppings. At the top of each column, place a favourite topping. (e.g. lemon and sugar, strawberries, jars of chocolate spread, honey and maple syrup). Give each child a set number of wooden blocks and ask them to distribute these to show the toppings they love the most.

Share the Word (see p.6)

Explore and respond



Make

Prepare pancake batter, divide it into equal portions and tint each batter portion with food colouring in reds and pinks. Then put each dyed batter into its own clean, squeezezy condiment bottle. Lightly oil a non-stick frying pan and heat. Squeeze heart shapes of coloured batter into the pan and cook as normal.

Game

Provide real frying pans, and 'pancakes' cut from thick fabric or card (make sure the weight is enough to toss them). Create a race

track and ask the children to run round, flipping their pancake five times. The first person to reach the finish line with their pancake in the pan wins. Add obstacles for an extra challenge.

Prayer

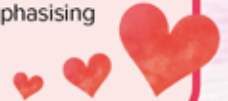
Invite everyone to add a squirt of lemon to their pancake (prepared in **Make**). As they do, encourage the children to talk to God about the things they are finding difficult.

Ask everyone to sprinkle sugar onto their pancake. As they do, encourage the children to talk to God about the things that are good in their life.

Then enjoy eating the pancakes together.

Love into Lent

As Lent begins with love this year, challenge the children to carry out an '**Act of Love and Kindness**' each day during Lent. Encourage everyone to think of different acts of love and kindness (for examples, see **WEB**) that they could do. Help the children to each pick about 15 different ideas, write these on coloured craft lolly sticks and place in a pot or jar. Ask everyone to take their jar home and select one each day during Lent, emphasising that each act of love will appear more than once.



Youth

Gather

Challenge everyone to discover the answers to the following.

1. Why do we have pancake races?
(see <http://olneypancakerace.org/pancake-race-history/>)
2. Why is Lent 40 days' long?
(See **Matthew 4.1-11**)
3. Why do people make pancakes?
(Christians made pancakes to use up the eggs and fat they had in store before fasting during Lent)
4. Why do people fast in Lent?
(See **Matthew 4.1-11**)
5. What is used to make the ash for 'ashing' on Ash Wednesday?
(Palm branches)

Share the Word (see p.6)

Explore and respond



Make

Make tin can stoves together (see **WEB**) and cook pancakes on them. Adult supervision required.

Take empty, clean tin cans. Use a tin opener to carefully punch holes all the way round both ends of the can, these allow oxygen to circulate around the candle. Put a tealight on a china or metal plate, light it and gently put the tin can over it. Add a drop of oil to the top of the can and heat it up. Pour a tablespoon of batter onto the oil.

Run a table knife around the edges of the pancake to loosen it, and flip the pancake over to help it cook evenly. Use the knife to gently remove the finished pancake.

Game

Challenge the young people to take part in **Ready, Steady, Flip!** Ask them to flip and catch pancakes as many times as they can in 30 seconds. Use cooled pancakes, to avoid the risk of burns. Create a leaderboard and encourage everyone to have a go. Finish by asking the top two 'flippers' to go head-to-head.

Prayer

Remind everyone that fasting during Lent allows people to focus more on God. Explain that you are going to make **Finger Labyrinths**, to slow down and connect with God.

Provide paper plates, glue and string. Starting in the centre of the plate, show the group how to spiral the string outwards to create one path to and from the centre. Fix the string in place. Explain to everyone how to walk their fingers around, on the way to the centre thinking about the ways they experience Jesus' love; in the centre, pausing and thanking Jesus for his love; on the journey out, thinking about how they share Jesus' love.

Love into Lent

Create **Acts of Love and Kindness Jars**, (see the **Children** section, above), asking the young people to think of their acts of love in different categories. Love for friends and family; the community; the world; yourself, and God. Can everyone colour code their sticks to show the categories, and choose a different one each weekday during Lent?



Our journey through the lectionary in 2024

This year, Roots will explore lectionary readings that help us to see and understand the big story of the Bible, and how it all points to Jesus. Managing Director Melanie Cave explains more.



Over the past few months, I've had some interesting conversations with Roots subscribers about teaching the Bible through the lectionary. Recently a minister told me how, although it was not part of his church tradition, he'd stumbled across the lectionary in his thirties and he continues to follow it twenty years later. He loved that it forced him to face the difficult passages in the Bible. He embraced the discipline that he couldn't get away with just preaching from his favourite passages. He had to regularly face and preach on some of the uncomfortable teachings of Jesus.

I've also discussed the challenges of the lectionary with children's leaders: some of the passages are rather difficult to teach to children – not that Roots has ever shied away from it – but when the Gospel passages are not stories and more conceptual, it can be harder for children to grasp. One leader reflected that 'while the focus on Jesus in the Gospels is good, for the children who do come regularly, we end up doing the same stories again and again. The children don't know about Noah, Daniel and Moses because we haven't focused on the Old Testament.'

Another youth leader reflected how she loved exploring the Bible with teenagers who had started reading it for themselves. She relished their challenging questions (Why did God make circumcision the sign of the covenant, if it was a sign that only

half the population could potentially participate in?) and how their questions caused her to read and study more herself. She wondered how to help these teenagers to understand more about God's big plan for humanity as it is revealed through the Old Testament.

Why the Old Testament?

Although many churches focus on the Gospel readings, the lectionary encourages us to study and grapple with the Old Testament. Every week there is both an Old Testament reading and a Psalm in addition to the Gospel and Epistle. Behind this lies the conviction that all of Scripture is to be understood in light of the revelation of Jesus Christ. The words and actions of Jesus make sense in the context of the narrative and themes of the Old Testament.

“ The words and actions of Jesus make sense in the context of the narrative and themes of the Old Testament. ”

What is the lectionary?

The lectionary is simply an ordered collection of readings for use in worship. Lectionaries have been used since at least the fourth century. It accompanies a church calendar – that is, a list of festivals and events celebrated across a year. So, why use one? Their purpose is to help churches proclaim and celebrate the gospel, the story of Jesus Christ and his teaching, without any significant or challenging parts being left out or other parts overlapped.

For a full list of all the readings that we'll be exploring this year, take a look at our year planner at: rootsforchurches.com/yearplanner **WEB**

Understanding the whole story of the Bible

The Old Testament is an anthology of holy Jewish literature compiled over a millennium, including various genres: narrative, poetry, and prophetic writings. They were treasured, meditated on, and put in collections, as the scribes reflected on God's relationship with humanity, in particular with the people of Israel. Jesus quoted these Hebrew scrolls (known to him as the Tanakh, to us as the Old Testament) 78 times. The New Testament writers referenced these writings a further 205 times.

There has been a renewed popular and scholarly focus in recent years helping us see and understand the overarching big story of the Bible, how it all connects and points to Jesus. You might have read the children's Bible 'The Jesus Storybook Bible: every story whispers his name' by Sally Lloyd-Jones, taken part in the Bible Society's 'Bible Course', or watched a video by 'The Bible Project'. We hope you'll enjoy exploring these Old Testament passages with us through the lectionary this year, and that many in your church will be able to understand these big themes and how they all point to Jesus.

“ As we explore these passages we steep ourselves in the narrative that pointed Jesus' followers to recognise him as the Messiah – the fulfilment of all God's promises. ”

Even though, for a season, our primary reading will not be the Gospel, I want to assure you that we are still focusing on Jesus. The Hebrew scriptures are the scriptures Jesus read, memorised and meditated on. These Hebrew scrolls shaped his worldview, the stories he told, the words, metaphors and illustrations he chose, and are the framework of his teaching. Jesus, as well as being the Christ, was a Jewish rabbi living in the second temple period in Israel. Jesus declared that he came to fulfil these Hebrew scriptures. The lectionary sets these Old Testament passages in parallel to the Gospels to give us context and ways of understanding who Jesus is, and how we can understand his teaching.



If you feel you would prefer to focus on the Gospel rather than the Old Testament, Roots will still be able to support you: each week we will continue to offer fresh new Bible notes on all of the lectionary passages. Online, you'll be able to choose our previously published outlines for children's, youth and under 5s groups that focus on the week's Gospel reading.



From Epiphany to Holy Week we will explore **God's covenant** with creation, Noah, Abraham, Moses and the new covenant prophesied in Jeremiah that God wants to write on our hearts. In all of these passages, although we are not looking directly at Jesus, we find that the Hebrew Bible points us to Jesus. We see God's intention: to work with humans, and – although his human partners failed many times – ultimately, in Jesus, God's promises and plans for humanity are fulfilled. What an incredible lead-up to Easter!

Between Easter and Pentecost we dig into the **foundations of the Early Church** through the book of Acts. And then after Pentecost, we'll head back to pick up the themes of **covenant, kingship and messiah** as we follow the life of King David. We'll meditate on **true wisdom for life** in James and Proverbs, and then more wisdom as we explore **God's rescue** in Esther, **God's presence** in suffering in Job, and **God's faithfulness** in Ruth, coming back to the Gospels in Advent.

God shakes things up

In the beginning ✨, the beginning of everything, God made the heavens and the earth.

The earth had no clear shape and was empty of all the landmarks, places and things that we know.

Instead, there was a deep, dark ocean over all the earth.

And the Spirit of God ✨ was moving over the face of the waters, like a powerful wind pushing the waves along.

Then God spoke and said, 'Let there be light', and there was light! And God saw that the light was good ✨.

Then God split the light from the darkness and called the light 'day' and the darkness 'night'. So there was an evening and then there was a morning, and that was the first day ever.

See session outline on p.12.

Stop and share

Read the story and pause at the ✨ to share these points with the children.

- ✨ This is the very beginning of time, before God has created the world or anything to live on it.
- ✨ Here the Spirit of God is a strong, God-sized breath or wind.
- ✨ As Creator of the world, God sees all of it as good.



Children

God shakes things up

Genesis 1:1-5 **WEB** Bible notes

In this description or imagining of creation, before God creates the heavens and earth, there is only a formless void, complete darkness and endless water. God's first act is to create light, and then to separate light from dark, day from night – the first day.

Prepare and reflect

Over the next few weeks, we will explore the Old Testament passages from the Lectionary. (New Testament material can still be found on the website). Today we go right back to the beginning and discover how the voice of God speaks, illuminating the darkness and shaking things up.

Spend a moment reflecting on times when God has spoken and illuminated things in your life. Where would you wish to see things shaken up this year?

Most children will recognise the creation story – taken from the beginning of the Bible. Help them to see that God is still at work and can illuminate and shake things up today and in their lives.

WEB Activity sheets, templates, links and images as needed.
Give out the **Thrive** resource to encourage family faith at home.

See **Songs** and **Prayers** on p.14.

Gather

10 mins

Use the activity and prayer to welcome the group.

Follow the voice

WE

You will need: blindfold (optional).

- Divide the children into pairs explaining that one of them will be blindfolded or have their eyes shut as the other uses just their voice to guide them round. Ask some leaders to shout out and try to lead them off course. Can they listen to the right voice? Today we discover the importance of God's voice at the beginning.

Father, we come to you at the beginning of the year:

It begins here.

We come to you with our hopes for what lies ahead:

It begins here.

We come to you with fears for the future:

It begins here.

We come to you, Lord, for

it begins with you.

Amen.

Share the Word

10 mins

Read the story on p.10 and explore the passage together.

Bright beginnings

WS

You will need: large sheet of dark paper, white and yellow chalks.

- Take a large sheet of dark paper and point to it as the story begins. Lightly run a white chalk over it as the Spirit of God moves. Add flashes of yellow chalk as light appears.
- Colour one side white and yellow and label it 'Day'. Label the other side 'Night'.

Explore and respond

30 mins

Discover how the passage connects to daily life.

Order from chaos

WS

Explore how voices make a difference

You will need: selection of junk materials, tape, glue, string, child-safe scissors.

- Provide a selection of boxes, card and other 'junk' and lots of tape, glue or string. Ask the children to start building something together but without talking to each other.
- After a period of time allow them to start to talk about and discuss what they will make, and to carry on building.
- Once they have created something, look at it together and chat about the difference it made when voices were used and how, together, they created order from the chaos of the junk.

Or, see **Sound art** **WEB**

Searching for the light

ES

A relay to think about light illuminating

You will need: room with dark areas, created by using pop-up tents or draping cloth/blankets over tables; small torches or LED lights; a selection of reflective objects.

- Set up dark spaces at one end of the room and hide a selection of reflective objects in them. Then divide the group into teams and assign each team their own area.
- Provide one torch per team. Standing at the other end of the room, ask the children to run to their dark space in relay, go in, find an object and bring it back to their team.
- Talk together about how the light helped them find the objects and how the light of God illuminates things and enables us to see what is happening.

Talk together and talk to God

Discuss the theme, then bring your thoughts together in prayer.

- Think of a time when you were worried in the dark and then light appeared. How did you feel?
- Why do you think God said that the light was good?
- See if you can complete the sentence: God's love is like the sunshine because...



Under 5s

Read **Prepare and reflect**, and use the **Colouring sheet** WEB.
Play ideas: treasure basket filled with torches, LED tealights and shiny fabric.

Sing To the tune: *The wheels on the bus*

Welcome back to church this year, church this year,
church this year.
Welcome back to church this year, we're glad to have
you here.

Share the story

As you begin to tell the story, ripple a dark-coloured cloth.
Place a torch underneath and switch it on as God speaks.
Move the cloth to one side as God creates night and day.

*At the start there was nothing, just a swirling darkness.
Then God said, 'Let there be light'. And there was.
God separated the darkness and the light.
God called the light 'day' and the dark 'night'.*

Light and dark

Make the room dark and provide lit torches. Ask the children to move by following instructions such as move slowly, run, shake the lights, dance. Look at the difference the light makes. Switch off the torches and then turn on again, as you say: God said, 'Let there be light'.

Light up

Take sheets of A5 paper and ask the children to cover them in shaky lines, tape into a tube shape and fix an LED tealight in the bottom. Say, 'God shook things up when he said, "Let there be light!"' Switch on the lights as you say light.

Follow the leader

Beforehand, make reflection bottles filling small bottles with water and eco glitter. Shake them up as you pray:

God, thank you when you shake things up.
Shine torches through the bottles as the glitter settles and pray:
You bring light. **Amen.**

Sing To the tune: *Humpty dumpty sat on a wall*

Time to go now, and we can't wait,
we'll go out and make this year great.
Let's try our hardest to make our God proud,
do what we can to spread kindness around!

Percussion prayers activity.

Percussion prayers

E S A

Shaking up God's world this new year

You will need: small or homemade percussion instruments (alternatively clap or drum on tables).

- Explain that we don't always need to use words to pray. There are many ways to pray and today you will use percussion instruments.
- Think about the things the children want God to shake up and to illuminate. It might be in the world, locally or in the children's lives. After a short discussion, summarise the children's ideas.
- Ask them to think about these and shake their percussion instruments as they pray. After a short period put a hand up to 'stop' and then say, 'And God said let there be light'. Finish as the children shake their instruments and shout a loud **'Amen'**.

Go with God

10 mins

Reflect on the week's theme and what it means for everyday faith.

- Sit together with a torch, LED candle or other light source. Ask the children to reflect on one way they would ask God to shake things up. When they have thought of something and told God about this, ask them to turn on their light.

Lord, as we leave this place, walk with us.
Every new beginning begins with one step.
Let us be shaken by your power.
It begins now
Amen.

Go with God 24/7

S A

Put faith into action.

Look out for lights shining in the darkness this week. Think about how they remind you of God.



Songs and Prayers

Sing WEB Music links

0-5s

Wake it up, Fischy Music

5-11s

Thank You God from Same Boat Music, free to download with your ROOTS subscription.

Creation song, Saddleback Kids

God who made the earth, the air (JP 63)

It's a world of sunshine, a world of rain (CH4 245)

12+

All things new, Hillsong Worship

Miracle In The Works, Bryan & Katie Torwalt,

Miracle In The Works

Pray WEB Welsh translations

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Almighty God, we thank you for the year which now lies behind us.

We are thankful for all you gave and all we received.

We praise you for a new start, a new beginning and a new year.

Amen.

A prayer for forgiveness

Loving God, we are sorry for when we have not listened to your voice;

when we rejected your call,

or didn't recognise it as you.

Please work within us and forgive us.

Amen.

A prayer for others

Lord, work among our families, to shake up their lives. (*shake right foot*)

Work among our friends, to shake up their lives. (*shake left foot*)

Work among those who are suffering, to shake up their lives. (*shake right hand*)

Work among those who have strayed, to shake up their lives. (*shake left hand*)

Work among your world, to shake up this planet! (*shake all over!*)

Amen.

Youth

God shakes things up

Genesis 1:1-5 WEB Bible notes

In this description or imagining of creation, before God creates the heavens and earth, there is only a formless void, complete darkness and endless water. God's first act is to create light, and then to separate light from dark, day from night – the first day.

Prepare and reflect

Over the next few weeks, we will focus on the Old Testament readings as we discover how God is revealed to each of us. This week starts at the beginning, as God speaks into the chaos and shakes things up to transform and change.

As you reflect on the passage, think of words from God that have 'shaken you up' and been a turning point in your life. These might be things that have happened, conversations with others and moments of encountering God.

Help the young people to recognise that God still speaks and shakes things up today, and that they may be a part of this 'shaking up'.

WEB Check-in: a weekly biblical reflection on youth and contemporary culture. **Thrive:** A resource to encourage family faith at home. **Links, templates, images, and tracks.**

Gather

10 mins

Sound effect

ES

You will need: large bowl, clingfilm/plastic sheet, large elastic band, dried rice, speaker and music or phone.

- Place the clingfilm across a large bowl and secure with an elastic band. Sprinkle dried rice on to the plastic. Take a speaker or phone, place it next to the bowl and play some music through it.
- Experiment with how loud or quiet the music needs to be for the rice to move in different ways. Today we hear how the sound of God speaking immediately shakes things up.

Share the Word

10 mins

RCL Baptism of the Lord Year B:

Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11

Storyboard scenes

WS

You will need: blank storyboards with six sections (see template on WEB), pens, copies of the passage.

- Provide the young people, in small groups, with a blank storyboard, pens and copies of the passage. Ask them to read through the passage and storyboard it into six sections, highlighting the parts they feel are the most important.



First impressions WEB

Questions on the theme.

- If you made a snow globe, what would you put in it?
- If you could shake the world and start over, what would you want to see emerge?
- What can you do to help your vision take a step towards reality?

Explore and respond 30 mins

Light experiment S

Explore the difference light brings

- Pour the oil into a bottle and gradually add tonic water. The oil and water won't mix. Turn off the lights and shine a UV light through. The tonic water will glow, and the messy oil and water mix will become something beautiful. God's light shakes things up and brings beauty to the chaos.

Or

Shake it up WEA

Consider where we want to see God shake things up


You will need: sticky notes, pens; the song 'Shake it Off' by Taylor Swift and the means to play it.

- Ask the young people where they would like to see the voice of God shaking things up – in the world, your local community, in their lives? Play one minute of 'Shake it Off' and ask everyone to write their ideas on separate sticky notes and fix these to the wall. Look at them together. Do the young people believe God can shake things up? How might God use them to shake things up?

Words that bring change

WA

Discuss the ways words can shake things up

- Talk together about times when words have shaken things up and brought light. Times like Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech, or Greta Thunberg's address to the UN Climate summit. Are there others that the young people know of?
- Simple words can also bring light, for example, saying 'good morning' to someone who is lonely. When have the young people seen this in action?
-  Play 'Shake', Mercy Me on *Welcome To The New* during this activity.

Shake it up prayer

WS

Ask God to shake things up

You will need: paper, pens, large cloth or toy parachute.

- Ask the young people to write onto paper the people and situations where they want to pray for God to shake things up. Screw these up.
- Take the cloth/parachute and hold it together, shaking it up and down. Ask the young people to throw the paper balls, one at a time, shouting out the prayer if they wish, or simply, 'Amen'.

Go with God

10 mins

- Remind the young people that the voice of God brings illumination and light – not just to situations in the world or local area but also to them. Where do they need God to speak, illuminate or bring light in their own lives this year? In what areas may God be asking them to shake things up and bring light? They can write or draw these for themselves.
- Read the words of Psalm 29:3-4,11 and encourage the group to reflect on what they have written.

Go with God 24/7

EA

Where is God asking you to shake things up?
This week, do one small thing to make this happen.

Recognising when and how God calls

When Samuel was a boy, he served God in the Temple alongside a man called Eli ✦. It was rare for people to hear God speak in those days.

One night, when Samuel lay down on his mat, God called to him. Samuel ran to where Eli was sleeping, and said, 'Here I am – you called me!' Eli said, 'I didn't call you. Go back to bed.' Samuel lay down again. He heard a second time, 'Samuel!' He ran to Eli again and said, 'Here I am!' Again, Eli said, 'Go back to bed!'

Now Samuel had never experienced hearing a word from God before, so he did not realise what was happening. He heard his name for a third time, and again he ran to Eli. This time Eli realised that it was God calling the boy. He told Samuel, 'Go and lie down again. If you hear the voice, say: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."'

God called as before. Samuel answered. God told Samuel that judgement ✦ was coming for Eli's whole family because Eli's sons had done evil, and Eli had not stopped them. Samuel lay quietly until morning. He was afraid to tell Eli what God had said ✦. But Eli called Samuel and made him promise to tell him everything. When Samuel had finished, Eli said, 'God must do what God has chosen.'

Samuel grew up and God was with him, telling him things that were wise and true, so that he could teach the people ✦.

See session outline on p.18.

Stop and share

Read the story and pause at the ✦ to share these points with the children.

- ✦ Eli was the High Priest – the most senior religious person in the Temple.
- ✦ Judgement is a decision by God to punish or reward someone for their actions.
- ✦ Why might Samuel have been afraid to tell Eli what God said?
- ✦ How did Samuel know that God was with him?



Samuel!

Children

Recognising when and how God calls

1 Samuel 3:1-10,(11-20) **WEB** Bible notes

The young Samuel hears the Lord call to him, but thinks it is his master, Eli. After this happens three times, Eli tells Samuel to answer the Lord, saying: 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.' Samuel does so and receives a vision that God was about to do something new. After sharing his vision with Eli, and receiving more encouragement, Samuel grows up to be a renowned and trustworthy prophet of the Lord.

Prepare and reflect

The book of Samuel tells the story of a turning point in the life of ancient Israel as they moved from a time being led by judges to a time being ruled by a king. This passage tells the story of Samuel, the last of the judges, being called to service by God. The elderly priest Eli helps Samuel to notice God is calling.

Who has helped you to notice God in your life? Have you ever recognised God calling you?

While Samuel heard an audible voice from God, many people will 'hear' God calling in different ways. This session provides an opportunity to explore with the children the variety of ways we notice God's call on our lives

WEB Activity sheets, templates, links and images as needed.

Give out the **Thrive** resource to encourage family faith at home.

See **Songs** and **Prayers** on p.20.

Gather

10 mins

Use the activity and prayer to welcome the group.

Telecommunications

S

You will need: items or pictures to represent different technologies people have used to communicate, e.g. morse code, semaphore, dial telephone, mobile phone, telegram, pager.

- Invite the children to look at the items and work out what they have in common.
- Explain that these have all been ways of 'calling' people – of sending them a message. Ask: What ways might God use to 'call' us or send us a message?

Almighty God, you know us.
Help us to know you too.
Please hear us here today
in all we say and do.

Amen.

Share the Word

10 mins

Read the story on p.16 and explore the passage together.

Pantomime

WE

- Split the group into two halves: Samuels and Elis. Explain that as you read the story, whenever you say the words 'You called me', the Eli side should all shout, 'Oh no I didn't!' and the Samuel side should reply, 'Oh yes you did!'.

Explore and respond

30 mins

Discover how the passage connects to daily life.

Who's calling?

E

A game about noticing who is calling us

- Ask for a volunteer to sit at the front with their eyes closed and their back to the rest of the group.
- Select another child silently by pointing at them. They should call out the name of the person at the front, trying to disguise their own voice. The volunteer should then turn around and try to guess who called their name.
- Once you have played this a few times, discuss how people knew who was calling them. What signs or clues did they listen out for? How might we be able to tell when and how God is calling us?

Or, see **Human library** **WEB**

Story reminder

S

Make a reminder of Samuel's response to God

You will need: template **WEB**, scissors, colouring pens.

- Give each person a template and ask them to colour the figure of Samuel and decorate the square at the bottom which reads, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening'.
- Ask them to cut it out, then to decorate the reverse side of the square as a blanket. This can then be folded along the top line. It will look like Samuel sleeping in his bed. When the cover is removed, Samuel is awake and ready for God's call.
- Invite the children to take this home and place it beside their own bed, as a reminder each morning that God might be calling to them that day.

Talk together and talk to God

Discuss the theme, then bring your thoughts together in prayer.

- When and how do you feel close to God?
- How might Samuel have felt hearing the voice of God calling to him?
- What would you like to call out to God?



Under 5s

Read **Prepare and reflect**, and use the **Colouring sheet** **WEB**.
Play ideas: selection of toy phones.

Sing To the tune: *Here we go round the mulberry bush*

When God called out to Samuel, to Samuel, to Samuel,
when God called out to Samuel, God wanted him to listen.
Now God calls out to you and me, to you and me, to you
and me,
God's calling out to you and me, let's pause right now
to listen!

Share the story

Show the children how to wiggle their fingers by their ears when Samuel hears a voice.

Samuel worked with Eli.

One night, Samuel heard a voice calling him.

'Here I am, Eli,' he replied.

Eli said, 'It wasn't me.'

Again, Samuel heard his name. 'Here I am,' he said.

Eli said, 'It wasn't me.'

Again, Samuel heard his name. 'Here I am,' he said.

Eli said, 'It is God speaking. Next time say, "Here I am, Lord!"'

And that is what Samuel did.

Sound asleep?

Choose a 'wake up' sound (bell, hand clap, etc.) and share it with the children. Ask them to pretend to be asleep as you make a variety of sounds, and only to get up when they hear the right sound.

Called by name

Write each child's name in bubble letters and tape onto dark card. Provide paint, painting tools made from craft pompoms held with clothes pegs and show the children how to print all over the name in the card. Remind them that God calls us by name just as he did Samuel. Remove the letters to reveal each child's name.

Mirror prayer

Stand round a mirror together as you pray, adding your own actions.

If I am at home or at school or nursery, playing or sleeping. Whatever I am doing, I know God speaks to me. **Amen.**

Sing To the tune: 1,2,3,4,5

I can listen to God, and my God will speak to me.

Story reminder activity.

Listening for God

S

Be aware of God in contemplative prayer

You will need: quiet area, furnished with cushions or pillows.

- Ask the children to find a quiet and comfortable space for themselves, sitting or lying in whatever way they find comfortable.
- Invite everyone to close their eyes, slow their breathing and whisper the words, 'Speak, God. I am listening.' Encourage them to be aware of what they notice in the silence. What might God be saying to them or calling them to do today?
- Affirm that it is okay if some people didn't notice anything in the silence – we all notice God in different ways.

Go with God

10 mins

Reflect on the week's theme and what it means for everyday faith.

- Stand in a circle and throw a ball or beanbag to one another. When someone receives the ball/beanbag, invite them to say, 'I am ready to receive from God.'
- Talk about some of the ways you have discussed receiving a call from God during today's session.

Guide us, Lord Jesus, to hear your call.

Guide us, Lord Jesus, for you know our all.

Guide us, Lord Jesus, in all that we say.

Guide us, Lord Jesus, in your almighty way.

Amen.

Go with God 24/7

E A

Put faith into action.

Each night, look back over the day's activities. Are there times or events when God was at work?



Songs and Prayers

Sing WEB Music links

0-5s

Two little eyes to look to God

5-11s

Living and learning from Same Boat Music, free to download with your ROOTS subscription.

Hushed was the evening hymn

Here I am ready to go (Kidsource 105)

I am listening, Trueway Kids

12+

God is calling, Sunrise Worship, *Believe again*

Knowing You, Graham Kendrick, *Is Anyone Thirsty*

Pray WEB Welsh translations

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

God, you gave us all a calling:

Thank you for choosing me.

You know us better than we know ourselves:

Thank you for making me.

You love our strengths and weaknesses:

Thank you for loving me!

Amen.

A prayer for forgiveness

We find it hard to always recognise your voice,

Father God, forgive us when we think it is

our choice.

We ask that you can guide us, in your name we pray,

we need to seek your wisdom and listen every day.

Amen.

A prayer for others

Display images of famous leaders or celebrities who

have spoken out on how they have listened to God.

Thank God for their courage, and encourage the

group to pray out loud to ask God to give them the

same courage.

Youth

Recognising when and how God calls

1 Samuel 3:1-10,(11-20) WEB Bible notes

The young Samuel hears the Lord call to him, but thinks it is his master, Eli. After this happens three times, Eli tells Samuel to answer the Lord, saying: 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.' Samuel does so and receives a vision that God was about to do something new. After sharing his vision with Eli, and receiving more encouragement, Samuel grows up to be a renowned and trustworthy prophet of the Lord.

Prepare and reflect

Samuel's mother Hannah promised that if God gave her a child, she would dedicate her son to the service of God in the Temple. Thus, from a very young age he had been left in the care of Eli who was the priest of Shiloh. Eli helps Samuel to know the voice of God.

Have you ever felt that God was speaking to you? How did it happen? What was the context? When did you realise that it was a message from God?

At the time of Samuel, the word of the Lord was rare. How does contemporary society compare to that? The story of Samuel is an example of God communicating, and God is not restricted to voices in the night.

WEB **Check-in:** a weekly biblical reflection on youth and contemporary culture. **Thrive:** A resource to encourage family faith at home. **Links, templates, images, and tracks.**

Gather

10 mins

Catchphrases

W

You will need: Prepare a quiz of 5-10 familiar phrases (e.g. Doh!, Ay Caramba, Three words: Fab-u-LOUS!, It's a no from me, Keeeeeep dancing). Use audio recordings if you can.

- For each catchphrase, ask the group: If you heard these words, who would you expect to be saying them?
- Comment that when we hear the words, we expect a person and when we see the person we expect the words.

Share the Word

10 mins

RCL Epiphany 2 Year B:

1 Samuel 3:1-10,(11-20); Psalm 139:1-6,13-18;

1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51

Samuel, Eli and the Lord

WE

You will need: print outs of 1 Samuel 3:1-10.

- Use different voices to read the passage: Narrator, Samuel, Eli and the Lord. If appropriate, you can split the narrator's reading: 1, 2-6, 7-10.



First impressions WEB

Questions on the theme.

- This painting illustrates different ways in which God speaks – how many can you identify?
- When have you felt or known God calling you?
- How can we help each other to hear God's call?

Explore and respond 30 mins

Fifteen questions WS

However well we might know each other, there's always more to discover

- Split the group into pairs or threes.
- Explain that everyone should take it in turns to think of something that no one else in their pair or trio knows about them. It can be a favourite band or TV programme, somewhere they have visited, something they have done or even an ambition.
- Partners have 15 questions to discover the secret but the answer to each question can only be yes or no.

This is me WES

Reflect on how God might speak to us

You will need: paper and coloured pens.

- Invite everyone to draw a line down the middle of the paper. On one side, they should prepare a self-portrait using words or images that describe them, e.g. draw cricket bats for legs and a football for the head (if they like sports); or make a circle of hobbies for the head; or draw an outline of a body using words that describe them.
- On the other side, invite the young people to draw a picture of how they would like to be seen and spoken to by God.
- You could use 'This is Me', Keala Settle and *The Greatest Showman* cast as background music throughout.

Or

The way you created me WES

Explore how God knows us and thus speaks to us appropriately

- Play 'Be Still', Jason Silver, based on *Psalm 139*.
- Ask: How does God know us? Does God communicate with us? How might God speak to a person today?

Listening for God WES

A way into prayerful listening

- Explain that, in your prayers today, you will reflect on two scripture verses in silence. The length of silence will depend on your group, and it may be worth having a visual focus, e.g. a mirror.
- Read Psalm 139:1. Keep silence, then say together: Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.
- Be silent again for a little longer. Then read Psalm 139:14 and all say 'Amen'.

Go with God 10 mins

- Play the track 'God Only Knows', for King + Country, on *Burn The Ships*.
- Give everyone a piece of A4 paper to fold into three, making a simple triptych.
- Ask the young people to fill the three sections with symbols and words after reflecting on these questions:
 - 1) What have you done that has made you what you are?
 - 2) How have you encountered God? Have you heard about God or from God?
 - 3) Where next? How would you like God to communicate with you and what about?

Go with God 24/7 WS

Each night this week, reflect on your day and ask yourself what has God been saying to you.

Say: 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'

Keep silence for at least a minute.

How we respond to God's call

God spoke to Jonah, saying: 'Go to the city of Nineveh.' ✱ But Jonah refused. The people in Nineveh were enemies of Jonah's people. Instead, Jonah boarded a ship to travel to Tarshish, in the opposite direction.

There was a storm at sea. Jonah went overboard and was swallowed by a big fish and spent three days in its stomach. Jonah prayed inside the fish. He was sorry. The fish vomited Jonah up onto a beach near Nineveh. This time, when God asked Jonah to go to speak to the people in Nineveh, Jonah went.

Nineveh was a huge city and the people were doing bad things. Jonah shouted in the streets, 'Forty days more and this city will be destroyed!' The people believed Jonah was giving them a warning from God, so they began to show how sorry they were. They changed out of their clothes and put on sackcloth ✱. They did not eat all day but spent their time praying. Everyone in the city did this, from the richest to the poorest. God saw that the people had changed. They were truly sorry. God decided to ease up and not destroy the city after all.

Jonah was angry ✱. He wanted God to destroy Nineveh. He sat under a tall plant outside the city and sulked. God destroyed the tall plant instead. Jonah was sad. God said, 'You cared about this plant. Shouldn't I care about all the people who live in Nineveh?'

See session outline on p.24.

Stop and share

Read the story and pause at the ✱ to share these points with the children.

- ✱ Nineveh was an ancient Assyrian city, located where Mosul is now in Iraq.
- ✱ Sackcloth is the rough material that sacks are made of. People wore it as a sign they were asking God to forgive them.
- ✱ Why was Jonah angry?



Children

How we respond to God's call

Jonah 3:1-5,10 **WEB** Bible notes

After a perilous journey, running away from God, Jonah finally does as God has asked of him and goes to Nineveh to deliver God's call to repent. Surprisingly (to Jonah), the people do repent and God forgives them.

Prepare and reflect

Many will be familiar with the earlier part of Jonah's story where he runs away – Jonah's reluctance to follow God's call to speak out against the Ninevites lands him inside a big fish. In this passage, Jonah accepts God's call, Nineveh repents and God decides to spare them.

When have you been asked to do something you were reluctant to do? How did you respond?

Children will be familiar with being asked to do something they're not keen on by someone they love – tidying rooms, doing homework and so on. Reassure the children that while following Jesus can mean answering a difficult call, God promises to be with us always.

WEB Activity sheets, templates, links and images as needed.

Give out the **Thrive** resource to encourage family faith at home.

See **Songs** and **Prayers** on p.26.

Gather

10 mins

Use the activity and prayer to welcome the group.

How would you respond?

E

- Explain that you will call out a series of requests. One end of the room represents 'do it straight away' and the other represents 'turn and run away'. Ask the children to stand at one end, the other or somewhere in between to show how they would respond to each request.
- Call out a mixture of positive (e.g. eat a bar of chocolate) and negative (e.g. weed the garden) requests and see where people stand. Encourage a discussion about the drawbacks of the things they would do straight away and the up-sides to the things they would run away from.

Father, this week we may run far away from you, but we know you are at the core of everything we do. Open up your word, to help us hear you call. Pick us up off the ground, if we doubt or fall.

Amen.

Share the Word

10 mins

Read the story on p.22 and explore the passage together.

Emotions

E

- Read the story slowly, and each time a character (Jonah, the people of Nineveh, the king) is mentioned, stop and ask the children to make a facial expression to show how they think that person felt at this point in the story.
- What expression describes how they feel having heard the story?

Explore and respond

30 mins

Discover how the passage connects to daily life.

Obstacle course

E S

A game about following a call

You will need: a simple obstacle course, blindfolds, a reward (such as fruit or sweets).

- Set up a simple obstacle course round your space using whatever you have available (cones, chairs, tables...).
- Divide the children into pairs and ask them to take it in turns to try to complete the obstacle course blindfolded, with their partner stood at the opposite side calling instructions to them. Have a reward ready when people complete it successfully.
- Discuss what makes it easy or difficult to follow the instructions. Did the promise of a reward make it easier or harder? What might be the reward of following God's call?

Or, see **Expectations** **WEB**

Sackcloth embroidery

S A

Make a reminder to listen and respond to God's call

You will need: squares of jute sackcloth material, wool, large plastic sewing needles, marker pens, scissors.

- Discuss the different ways we might listen to or recognise God speaking to us.
- Ask each child to choose an object or symbol to represent a way God speaks, e.g. a Bible or praying hands. Give out the sackcloth squares and ask the children to draw an outline of their symbol on it using a marker pen.
- Thread the wool through a hole in the sackcloth on the line of their drawing, tying a knot in the end. Ask them to weave it in and out of the cloth following the outline they have drawn until they have completely covered their symbol, tying the wool at the end when finished. Encourage them to display this at home as a reminder to be ready to respond to God's call.

Talk together and talk to God

Discuss the theme, then bring your thoughts together in prayer.

- Have you ever had to do something you didn't really want to, but you knew it was for the best?

Under 5s

Read **Prepare and reflect**, and use the **Colouring sheet** [WEB](#).
Play ideas: feely bags or boxes for the children to explore.

Sing To the tune: *Incy wincy spider*

Sometimes it's not easy listening to God,
Jonah learned the hard way inside a great big cod!
But he learned to listen and made God very proud,
so put your listening ears on and try not to be loud!

Share the story

Take a sand tray and draw the outline of a city. Use small world people to represent Jonah and the people of Nineveh. Move the figures as you tell the story.

God told Jonah to go to Nineveh with a message.
But Jonah didn't like the people of Nineveh, so he didn't go. He went the other way. There was a big storm and Jonah got swallowed by a big whale.
Jonah was sorry he disobeyed God.
The fish spat him out on the beach.
Now Jonah went to Nineveh.
The city was so big it would take three days to walk across!
After one day Jonah stopped and said, 'God says change your ways or the city will be destroyed.'
The people did as Jonah said.
But Jonah was annoyed. He didn't want God to save the city. He moaned to God, but God told Jonah, I love all the people, not just the ones you like.
And God did not destroy the city.

Follow my leader

Play a 'Follow my leader' game and include some tricky actions such as walking backwards, hopping or crouching down low as you move. Explain that Jonah's journey wasn't easy and the message he had to tell was difficult, but he still followed God's lead.

Foam art

Cover a shallow tray with shaving foam, put blobs of paint on and swirl. Use paper and pencil to draw round and cut out everyone's footprint and press down on the foam. Turn over the foot shapes – they are all different. We can each follow God in our own unique way.

Following prayer

March round the room together as you pray:

Thank you that you call [*name of child*] and they can follow you.
Help each of us follow you in our own special way.
Amen.

Sing To the tune: *Polly put the kettle on*

Jonah was a groaner and a moaner, oh a groaner,
Yes, Jonah was a groaner till he learned to trust.
Then he listened to the Lord, with his heart, to the Lord,
Jonah listened to the Lord, and we can too!



Foam art activity.

- Why might Jonah have been reluctant to do what God was asking him to do?
- What things might God ask us to do today that take us outside our comfort zones or cause us to stand out from the crowd?

Delivering a message

A

Pray about this week's news

You will need: a child-friendly news source such as the *BBC Newsround* website [WEB](#).

- Take a look at the headlines in this week's news, and ask each child to choose a story to pray about.
- Explain that God wanted Jonah to take a message to the people in Nineveh. In a moment of quiet, invite the children to think about the news story they have chosen and bring it to God in prayer. What do they think God's message might be to this situation?

Go with God

10 mins

Reflect on the week's theme and what it means for everyday faith.

- Listen to or watch the song 'How far I'll go' from the film *Moana*. Moana is torn between playing along with what others expect or following a voice inside her that is calling her to something different.
- Ask the children to name some places where they spend time during the week. How might the voice of God be calling them to live differently in these places?

You want me to do what? Run on the spot (*run*).

There must be an easier way.

You want me to do what? Do a belly flop (*swim*).

Maybe another day.

You want me to do what? Bounce a ball (*ball*).

That doesn't sound too bad at all.

Be with us, oh Lord, for even if we fall,

we know we must listen to your call. **Amen.**

Go with God 24/7

W E S A

Put faith into action.

Whenever you're faced with a decision this week, stop and think 'What might God be calling me to do?'



Songs and Prayers

Sing WEB Music links

0-5s

Open our hearts (Jim & Jean Strathdee)
We are marching in the light of God

5-11s

Jonah's song, TMC Youth
I do not know what lies ahead
Stop, look and listen, Colby's Clubhouse/BF Kids

12+

Speak O Lord, Keith and Kristyn Getty, *Speak O Lord*
Behold, the King is calling, Black Voices Movement
– use an excerpt.

Pray WEB Welsh translations

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Almighty God,
Thank you that you care for each of us and
promise to be with us always.
Help us to listen for your call.
Amen.

A prayer for forgiveness

Loving Jesus, when we choose our own paths and
not yours:

Forgive us.

When we prioritise school and work over you:

Forgive us.

When we spend more time with our friends than
with you:

Forgive us.

In your precious name we pray.

Amen.

A prayer for others

Holy Spirit, reach out to those who are running.
Bring peace to those who feel worn out.
Give courage to those who are feeling helpless.
Empower us all to support one another with
your calling.

Amen.

How we respond to God's call

Jonah 3.1-5,10 WEB Bible notes

After a perilous journey, running away from God, Jonah finally does as God has asked of him and goes to Nineveh to deliver God's call to repent. Surprisingly (to Jonah), the people do repent and God forgives them.

Prepare and reflect

The book of Jonah is a short book. Its beginning is familiar where Jonah is told by God to preach to the people of Nineveh and he heads off in the opposite direction and ends up inside a big fish. After praying inside the fish he is cast out and heads off to Nineveh.

Jonah appears to have been certain of what God wanted him to do and yet he decided not to do it. Have there been times when you have ignored God's clear direction for your life? How and why?

Remind the young people that God did not give up on Jonah even though he disobeyed. God kept pointing Jonah in the right direction.

WEB **Check-in:** a weekly biblical reflection on youth and contemporary culture. **Thrive:** A resource to encourage family faith at home. **Links, templates, images, and tracks.**

Gather

10 mins

Out of our comfort zone

WES

You will need: comfortable chairs/cushions, drinks, healthy snacks.

- Create a relaxing atmosphere and talk about how pleasant it is when things are going well. What do we enjoy doing? What is our comfort zone?
- But sometimes God wants us to do something that takes us into unknown or undesirable territory. What then?



First impressions WEB

Questions on the theme.

- Why might this young man have stopped like this?
- The end of a long journey, a special moment – how do you describe your response to God's call?
- Is there something you feel you should be doing, but are not?

Share the Word 10 mins

RCL Epiphany 3 Year B: **Jonah 3:1-5,10**; Psalm 62:5-12;
1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20

God spoke to Jonah WE

You will need: pens and papers, access to YouTube.

- Play two YouTube clips of the story of Jonah WEB.
- Talk together about how God calls people in Jonah's story, e.g. God called Jonah and told him to go to Nineveh, and God told the sailors to throw Jonah overboard.
- For each call, invite the group to draw an emoji to reflect the emotion that the listener felt.
- When the story is finished, share your emojis and reflect on the different emotions that the call of God provokes.
- If appropriate, sing together 'I the Lord of sea and sky'.

Explore and respond 30 mins

Get up and go WES

A game about obedience to tasks we like and dislike

You will need: a list of tasks on individual papers/cards and equipment to complete them; a die.

- Prepare tasks that can be done in your space, e.g. eat a sweet, eat two dry cream crackers, shake hands with everyone in the room, run round the room three times.

- Place the tasks in two piles, dividing the pleasant from those less pleasant.
- In turn throw the die. Even numbers pick a nice task. Odd numbers the less pleasant.

Or

Three-day journey

Think about how big Nineveh was and what it was like to walk through it

You will need: maps, pens and paper.

- Invite the young people to plan a three-day journey. Ask: Where would you go and what route would you take? How would you travel?
- Invite them to make a list of everything they would need.

David Wilkerson WES

Discuss how God calls

You will need: mini biography of David Wilkerson WEB.

- Read together a mini biography of David Wilkerson.
- Ask: How do you think the Wilkersons felt about God's call. How do you think David knew that God was calling him? Can you think of any examples of God's call in your life?

One Step Beyond WES

A prayer for God to call us beyond our comfort zone

You will need: a recording of 'One Step Beyond', by Madness.

Copies of these words from the Methodist covenant prayer:

Your will, not mine, be done in all things, wherever you may place me, in all that I do, and in all that I may endure ...

- Reflect on the words and invite the young people to pray them, if they feel able to, as you listen to the Madness track.

Go with God 10 mins

- Ask the group to imagine they have been on a sea voyage today.
- What was their departure port like? What was the ship like? How were their travelling companions?
- What was the journey like? Was it rough or smooth? Did they have a single destination, call at several ports or was it a round trip?
- How do they feel about the journey now? Are they glad they went?
- Do they feel different from when they started? How?

Go with God 24/7 WES

God's call is not always what we expect, so try to offer help to people in a new or different way.

How we discern what comes from God

Moses had been the leader of God's people for a long time. He had led them out of Egypt where they had been slaves. They lived together in the wilderness for many years and he continued to be their leader.

Once Moses went up a mountain called Horeb and God gave him the 10 Commandments ✨. The people waited ▲ in the valley below. They were very frightened ▲ by the storms and the lightening fires that burned on top of the mountain. They begged Moses to be their messenger between them and God because they were afraid to approach God themselves ✨.

When Moses was old and full of years, he knew that he was not going to enter the Promised Land ✨ with the people. He spoke to them and reassured them ▲, 'God will give you a new leader, like me, from among you. You must pay attention to what this leader says. God knows that you were frightened at Mount Horeb and God has agreed to give you another leader after me. God will give the words to this leader to speak to you. The leader will pass on everything that God says, and you must pay attention and obey ▲. But if someone else pops up and pretends falsely that God has told them to speak, that is very serious and the penalty for them is death. They will be saying the wrong things and so you do not need to be afraid of what they say.'

See session outline on p.30.

Stop and share

Read the story and pause at the ✨ to share these points with the children.

- ✨ The 10 Commandments are a list of instructions God wants people to live by.
- ✨ Why might people have been afraid to approach God themselves?
- ✨ The Promised Land was a safe country of their own that God promised to the Israelites who had been freed from slavery.

For exploring the ▲, see **Share the Word** on p.30.



Children

How we discern what comes from God

Deuteronomy 18.15-20 **WEB** Bible notes

Moses, speaking to the people, says that one day God will send another prophet like him. This prophet will speak God's words with God's full authority, such that anyone who refuses to listen will be held accountable by God. The people are also warned against listening to false prophets. A true prophet's words will prove to be true.

Prepare and reflect

In Deuteronomy, Moses reminds the Israelites of their covenant with God. Here, he brings the people God's promise to send a prophet like Moses whom they should listen to and obey, but also warns that no prophet should dare to say in God's name anything that did not come from God.

What voices have authority in your life? How do you tell what is authentic and what is not?

Children have to make choices every day about who to listen to and whose voice to follow. Some may also have experience of having something to say but not being listened to. These experiences can help them understand the concept of discerning what comes from God.

WEB Activity sheets, templates, links and images as needed.

Give out the **Thrive** resource to encourage family faith at home.

See **Songs** and **Prayers** on p.32.

Gather

10 mins

Use the activity and prayer to welcome the group.

Top hat illusion

S

You will need: top hat image (see template on **WEB**), rulers.

- Show the children the top hat image and tell them it is taller than it is wide. Ask who believes your claim.
- Give the children a ruler and help them to measure the height and width of the top hat – they will discover that they are the same.
- Discuss how you can test the claims people make to decide if you believe them.

Lord, help us to hear your word, and to speak it.
Help us to know your truth, and to show it.
Help us to feel your love, and to share it.
In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Share the Word

10 mins

Read the story on p.28 and explore the passage together.

Freeze frames

ES

- At each of the following parts of the story, (marked by a ▲ on page 24 shout 'Freeze!' and ask the children to stand as a statue to show what they think the characters might be doing or saying at that time: 'The people waited', 'They were very frightened', 'They begged Moses', 'He... reassured them' and 'You must pay attention and obey'.

Explore and respond

30 mins

Discover how the passage connects to daily life.

Spot the false statement

WE

Decide which statements 'ring true'

- Tell the children three instructions that come from you. Two of these should be things you might say to them during a typical session and one should be something that you would be unlikely to say.
- Ask them to guess which instruction didn't sound like something you'd say. Discuss how they could tell what came from you and what didn't.
- Ask how we might tell what comes from God and what doesn't.

Telephone line

S

Make a string telephone to think about prophets

You will need: paper cups (two per child), pencils, sticky tack, string, pens.

- Give each child paper cups and help them to make a small hole in the end of each one by resting the cup on a ball of sticky tack and pushing a pencil through from the other side. (For younger children, you may like to make the holes in advance.) Ask them to thread a length of string through both holes from the outside of the cup and tie a knot inside the cup. The cups could be decorated using pens.
- Working in pairs, ask the children to stand apart, each holding one cup, so that the string is taut. One person can hold the cup to their mouth and the other to their ear and a message can be delivered along the line.
- Explain that a prophet was someone who helped deliver a message from God to the people. How might people decide whether or not to listen to what a prophet was saying?

Or, see **Measuring stick** **WEB**



Telephone line activity.

Talk together and talk to God

Discuss the theme, then bring your thoughts together in prayer.

- Who do you take notice of at school? Why?
- Who might God want us to take notice of in the world today?
- Whose voice is sometimes ignored? How could you listen for God speaking through them?

Hall of fame

ESA

Pray for those whose voices we trust

You will need: paper, pens.

- Ask the children to think of someone in their life whose voice they know they can trust (e.g. teachers, parents, friends, doctors...).
- Invite them to draw a picture of that person and, as they do, to pray for God to be with that person.
- Place all of the pictures together in a 'hall of fame' and pray:

Thank you, God, for these people we can trust and rely on.
Help them and us to recognise your voice in the world. **Amen.**

Go with God

10 mins

Reflect on the week's theme and what it means for everyday faith.

- Ask if anyone knows the phrase, 'Actions speak louder than words' and discuss what it means. Ask people to call out actions that would demonstrate that someone is following God and write these down for everyone to see. Invite the children to choose one of these actions to work on throughout the week.

Loving God, thank you that you see all things,
know all things and feel all things.
Help us to trust you in everything,
knowing that you love us and know what's best for us.
Amen.

Go with God 24/7

EA

Put faith into action.

Each night, look back over the day's activities. Are there times or events when God was at work?

Under 5s

Read **Prepare and reflect**, and use the **Colouring sheet** **WEB**.
Play ideas: selection of toy phones.

Sing To the tune: *1,2,3,4,5, once I caught a fish alive*

I want to hear now, Moses' story about how
God used this one man, to affect the future plan.
God can use us all too – Moses, Jesus, me and you.
We're called then and now, listen and we'll tell you how!

Share the story

Show the actions for children to perform each time they hear the words: 'messenger' – hands out in front with palms up, 'God' – point upwards, 'everyone' – point at each other.

God had chosen Moses to do a special job. He had led God's people out of Egypt towards a new land where they would be free.

Moses was old and knew it was time for someone else to take the lead. He gathered the people together and said: 'God will send a messenger to you.
The messenger will speak the words of God.'

Simon says

Play a simple game of 'Simon says'. Ask the children how they know when to do the actions? They must listen out for the things that Simon says. Explain that it is important to work out what the things that God says to us are.

Wax art

On a large sheet of paper write GOD using a white candle. Provide bowls of watery paint and ask the children to paint over it. What do they notice appearing? When can they tell it says God? Remind them that it is important to watch out for the things that are from God.

Play dough prayers

Give everyone a ball of play dough to roll in their hands. Ask them to flatten it out and then walk their fingers across it as you pray:

Dear God,
help me to hear and follow the messages
that are from you.
Amen.

Sing To the tune: *Daisy, daisy, give me your answer do*

Moses, Moses, he was a brave young man,
he saw God unfold an amazing plan.
He didn't feel good or worthy,
he was inclined to worry.
But God's great power, from hour to hour,
meant that Moses' path was true.



Songs and Prayers

Sing WEB Music links

0-5s

Our God is a great big God
Listen, Lord (WGWG, CAYP 71)

5-11s

Keeper of my heart from Same Boat Music, free to download with your ROOTS subscription.

God is our guide, our light and our deliverer (JP 56)
When our Lord walked the earth (WGWG, One is the Body)
Jesus, be the centre

12+

How great is our God
Your name is Power, Rend Collective, *YOUR NAME IS POWER*

Pray WEB Welsh translations

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Thank you, God, for all your promises to us in the Bible.
When we read the Bible, help us to listen to what you want us to hear.
Amen.

A prayer for forgiveness

When we have ignored your authority:
God forgive us.
When we have listened to the commands of others instead:
Jesus forgive us.
When we didn't recognise your voice:
Holy spirit forgive us.
Amen.

A prayer for others

Lord Jesus,
we pray that we will always seek you,
and listen to your words.
Help us to live in a way that pleases you,
and be willing to follow where you lead us.
Help us to trust you more each day
and help us to show your love to others in our daily lives.
Amen.

Youth

How we discern what comes from God

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 WEB Bible notes

Moses, speaking to the people, says that one day God will send another prophet like him. This prophet will speak God's words with God's full authority, such that anyone who refuses to listen will be held accountable by God. The people are also warned against listening to false prophets. A true prophet's words will prove to be true.

Prepare and reflect

This chapter of Deuteronomy offers instruction regarding priests and prophets. The tone changes as Moses speaks of a prophet that is to come (v.15). This prophet will be an Israelite, a man of the people. He will speak God's word and be a mediator who will command the attention of the people. While Joshua succeeded him, the true prophet that Moses speaks of is understood to be Jesus.

Just as it is essential that a prophet's listeners know that their words come from God, we should check that those who command our attention speak in accordance with the values of God.

These days we are bombarded with recommendations, role models and advice. The passage challenges us all to reflect on how we decide to whom we should listen.

WEB Check-in: a weekly biblical reflection on youth and contemporary culture. **Thrive:** A resource to encourage family faith at home. **Links, templates, images, and tracks.**

Gather

10 mins

Values

WE

You will need: pens and paper.

- Introduce the idea of values that are important to us. Challenge the young people to write down five words that are important to God. In doing so, they will start to discern what is of God.

Share the Word

10 mins

RCL Epiphany 4 Year B: Deuteronomy 18:15-20;
Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28

What speaks to you

ES

To encourage careful listening and response to the bible passage

You will need: coloured pencils and papers.

- Read the passage and then read it a second time, slowly.
- Invite the group to pick a word or phrase that stands out for them and to draw an image of it to display.



First impressions WEB

Questions on the theme.

- What is this and what is it supposed to do?
- How do you know what is truth?
- How do we know what comes from God?

Explore and respond 30 mins

If I could fly memory game WEA


Explore which values are/should be important to God

- Ask individuals to imagine that they could fly and look at the whole world – what good things would they see?
- Begin by saying 'If I could fly, I'd like to see...', then the next person repeats what has been said and adds something, and so on.
- After a while, change the focus from 'good things' to 'bad' and repeat the game. Discuss what this game might demonstrate about what is important to God.

Or

God speaks, we do WA


Listening for the true voice of God demands action

-  Play 'Voice of Truth', Casting Crowns.
- Talk about how listening to prophetic words about the will of God should mean putting them into action.
- Can anyone think of an organisation that does this (e.g. Christian Aid, Leprosy Mission, TEARfund).
- Plan an event to raise funds and awareness for one such organisation.

Respecting authority WS

Explore what authority means

You will need: the means to show a YouTube video clip.

- Discuss the concept of authority with the young people. Ask: What person comes to mind when you say the word authority. Why? Do you feel you have any authority? How do you decide whether someone has authority over you? What does it mean to respect a person's authority? Does any of this conversation relate to God?
-  Play the YouTube version of 'Authority (In The Name Of Jesus)', Stars Go Dim on *Grace In The Wilderness*.
- Afterwards, share thoughts and feelings.

Listening prayer WESA

Spend some time listening for God

You will need: the means to show a YouTube video clip.

- Spend a minute without talking but noticing any sounds you hear. Then, invite the young people to share what they heard and how they felt.
- Explain that God's voice can be heard and experienced in different ways. Begin another minute of silence by inviting God to speak while you listen. Conclude the silence by thanking God for being present with you.

Go with God

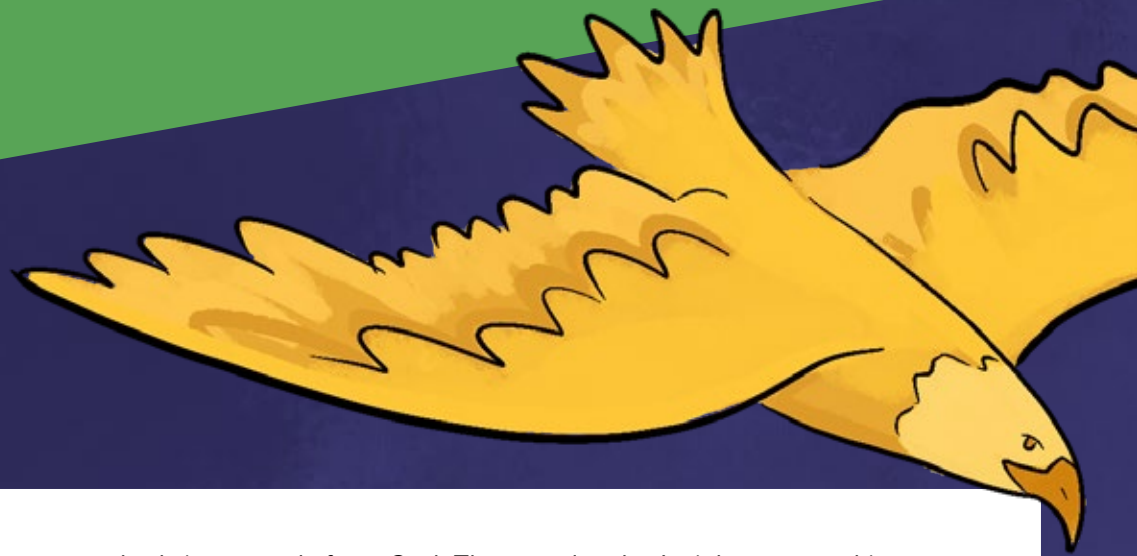
10 mins

- Think of three instructions to offer: one silly, one personal and one far-reaching (e.g. put your left hand on your nose and your right thumb in your ear, read the book of Deuteronomy this week, always try and live in peace).
- For each instruction ask the young people: 'If I say (instruction), am I speaking the word of God?'. How can they tell?
- Is there a word from God that they would like to say to the world?

Go with God 24/7 WESA

If you face a difficult situation this week, think about 'What Would God Say?' (or WWGS!). And pray for God's guidance.

You are not forgotten by God



Isaiah was a prophet, someone who brings words from God. The people who Isaiah was speaking to were forced to live in a foreign land and were feeling hopeless.

Have you not heard? Have you not understood who God is? Do you not know how things have been from the very beginning? God is the one who sits right above the whole of the earth. The people seem as small as grasshoppers and the skies are like the fabric of a curtain or a tent. Powerful leaders come and go throughout history: they fade away like plants. God blows over them and their time in charge is finished.

The Holy One says, ‘Who is as powerful as me? Who created the stars? Who numbered them, named them, called them into being?’ All the stars were made by God and, because God is powerful, not one of them is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, ✱ ‘God doesn’t see my life or treat me fairly?’ Have you not heard? The Lord is everlasting. The Lord made everything. God does not get tired or feel faint. God’s understanding is deeper than we will ever know. God gives strength to the weak, and power to people who have none. Even young people will feel faint and tired out. But those who wait for the Lord shall become strong again, they shall take off and fly like eagles ✱, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

See session outline on p.36.

Stop and share

Read the story and pause at the ✱ to share these points with the children.

- ✱ Jacob and Israel were the two nations of Judah and Israel – a way of including all God’s people.
- ✱ Eagles represent strength. In what ways is this description different from the ‘grasshoppers’ that people feel as small as?





Children

You are not forgotten by God

Isaiah 40:21-31 **WEB** Bible notes

The prophet contrasts the grandeur and eternity of God to that of even the mightiest of humans. There is no comparison. No human could ever create the universe and all that is in it. No one could know every single element and creature and person in the universe, as God does. And God will strengthen and uphold his people for whatever they will face.

Prepare and reflect

This section of Isaiah comes from a time when the people were living in exile in Babylon, feeling defeated and without hope. The prophet reminds them that, however bleak their situation, God has not forgotten them and will raise them up.

Have there been times in your life when you felt abandoned by God? Looking back, can you see how God has helped you through those times?

The passage is full of imagery, from star-filled skies to eagles' wings to tiny young plants. There is great scope to allow children to engage their natural sense of wonder to imagine God as being in every detail of the universe.

WEB Activity sheets, templates, links and images as needed. Give out the **Thrive** resource to encourage family faith at home.

See **Songs** and **Prayers** on p.38.

Gather

10 mins

Use the activity and prayer to welcome the group.

Where's Wally?

S

You will need: 'Where's Wally?' or a similar illustrated cartoon **WEB**.

- Show the children the cartoon and allow a few minutes to see if anyone can find Wally.
- Reveal the answer and explain that, although it was hard to see him, he was there the whole time.

Lord, be with us in this space.
Open our hearts to your love
and our eyes to your word.

Amen.

Share the Word

10 mins

Read the story on p.34 and explore the passage together.

Actions

S

- Ask the group to come up with actions/signs for the words and phrases: Have you not heard?, small as grasshoppers, God blows, tired, stars, take off and fly like eagles.
- Read the passage and invite the children to join in using the actions they have created when the relevant words are said.

Explore and respond

30 mins

Discover how the passage connects to daily life.

In the news

WESA

Identify difficult situations in this week's news.

You will need: newspapers, scissors.

- Provide a selection of newspapers or printed online news headlines. Allow the children some time to look at the pictures and headlines and ask them to cut out one picture or story that represents a situation where people might feel like God has forgotten them.
- Display all the pictures/headlines in the middle of the group. Choose a few stories and ask for suggestions of where God is present and at work in those situations. (For example, in situations of war or disaster, some might see God present through aid workers.)

Or, see **Plant forget-me-nots** **WEB**

Eagle wings

WESA

Make an encouragement to give away

You will need: paper, pens, scissors (or see template on **WEB**).

- Ask the children to fold a sheet of paper in half, and draw one eagle's wing on the paper, with the inside edge of the wing along the fold of the paper. Or use the template and have some pre-cut.
- Ask the children to think of someone they know who might need lifting up. Ask them to decorate the wings with words of encouragement for that person, including a reminder that God will remember them.
- Invite the children to take their wings away and, under the care of a guardian, give them to the person they had in mind. Discuss other ways to encourage and remind each other that God is always with us.

Talk together and talk to God

Discuss the theme, then bring your thoughts together in prayer.

- Can you think of a time in your life when you were full of joy? Can you think of a time when you were sad?



Under 5s

Read **Prepare and reflect**, and use the **Colouring sheet** [WEB](#).
Play ideas: selection of toy phones.

Sing To the tune: *Hickory dickory dock*

We have a friend we can trust,
 who shows us that faith is a must.
 When things get tough, and life feels rough,
 walk even closer to God.

Share the story

Take a shallow tray and cover it with sand. As you tell the story use a stick to draw images in it for: the world (x2), stars, rest and eagle.

Don't you know, haven't you heard?

God created the whole world.

Look at the sky, God created all the stars.

Look up and see, God created the world.

God doesn't need to rest.

God gives strength to those who are tired.

They will fly like eagles and never be tired.

Canopy of stars

Hold a large piece of transparent material and ask the children to sit or lie underneath. Gently wave it up and down, sprinkling paper stars on as you say, 'Look up and see. God who made the stars never forgets you.'

Remembered

Gather leaves or feathers beforehand. Give each child a rectangle of baking paper and help them stick leaves and feathers on in wing shapes. Show them how the light shines through when held against a window. Encourage the children to stick theirs in a window at home and to look up and know that they are not forgotten by God.

Up and down prayers

Show the children how to trace up and down the fingers of one hand with a finger from the other. As they do, pray:

Whether I am feeling up or down, happy or sad
 may I know that God never forgets me.

Amen.

Sing Great Big God O [WEB](#).

Eagle wings activity.

- Isaiah reminds us that God is always with us. Where was God in each of these situations?
- What difference does it make in your life knowing that God will always love you?

God remembers you

E A

Pray for one another

- Explain that you are going to spend time praying for each other in the group. Children can feel free to share a prayer request, or to remain silent.
- Ask everyone to walk slowly round the room until they meet a partner. Each partner can share something that they would like the other person to pray about or can give a smile to show that they wish their prayer to remain silent.
- Each partner should then say to the other, '[name], God will never forget you'. They can then walk again until they each meet a new partner.

Go with God

10 mins

Reflect on the week's theme and what it means for everyday faith.

- Give each child a paper star and a pencil. Invite them to write down or draw one thing they will remember from today's session, then place these on a sheet of black paper/cloth to create a starry sky. Take a moment to look at the stars and name some of the things people will remember.

We are not forgotten.

No, we are not forgotten.

We are not forgotten.

God will guide our way.

Remember this prayer, every single day!

Amen.

Go with God 24/7

E A

Put faith into action.

Each night this week, look back over the happy and sad times of the day and remember that God was there with you.



Songs and Prayers

Sing WEB Music links

0-5s

When I'm feeling sad, I can call out to him
(CH4 569)

5-11s

Thank You For Loving Me from Same Boat Music,
free to download with your ROOTS subscription.

God beside, Fischy Music

One more step along the world I go

When I'm feeling down and sad

12+

Not Forgotten, Ryan Stevenson

Good Good Father, Chris Tomlin, *Good Good Father*

Pray WEB Welsh translations

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

We thank you Holy One for your power of patience.

Thank you for our renewed strength.

Thank you for helping us to soar, even when we
feel like falling.

Thank you for being our encourager and creator.

Amen.

A prayer for forgiveness

Father, when we thought you had forgotten us,
please forgive us.

When we doubted your strength, please forgive us.

When we did not believe in your power,

please forgive.

Strengthen our faith and our trust in you.

Amen.

A prayer for others

Loving God,

we thank you for always being with us.

We think about people who may feel forgotten
in our communities:

Help us to show them your love and care.

Amen.

Youth

You are not forgotten by God

Isaiah 40:21-31 WEB Bible notes

The prophet contrasts the grandeur and eternity of God to that of even the mightiest of humans. There is no comparison. No human could ever create the universe and all that is in it. No one could know every single element and creature and person in the universe, as God does. And God will strengthen and uphold his people for whatever they will face.

Prepare and reflect

The theme of knowing and hearing is woven through the book of Isaiah. Chapter 40 begins a new section addressed to the people near the end of the Babylonian exile. The prospect of return was not an easy matter to process. Their homeland had been destroyed. There was no Temple, and they were used to life in Babylon.

It is worth reflecting on how you would cope with any changes that you theoretically hope for (e.g. a huge lottery win).

Young people are often on the fringe of society. Judgments are made of them. Questions are asked of them. It is assumed that they have clear hopes for the future when often they are struggling simply to live in the now. God is speaking to them.

WEB Check-in: a weekly biblical reflection on youth and contemporary culture. **Thrive:** A resource to encourage family faith at home. **Links, templates, images, and tracks.**

Gather

10 mins

How's your week been?

W E S

You will need: pens and paper.

- Sit comfortably in a circle and share how everyone's week has been. Invite the young people to share any highlights or difficulties, if they would like to.
- End by reminding everyone that in all of this God was with them.

Share the Word

10 mins

RCL Epiphany 5 Year B: Isaiah 40:21-31;

Psalm 147:1-11,20c; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

The Message reading

W E S

Explore which values are/should be important to God

- Print out Isaiah 40:21-31 from the *Message* WEB with copies for everyone.
- Ask for volunteers to read vv.21-24,25-26 and 27-31. Encourage dramatic reading if possible.



First impressions WEB

Questions on the theme.


- Why are bees so important to human survival?
- How can we make sure no one feels insignificant and forgotten?
- What helps you to know you are known and loved by God?

Explore and respond 30 mins

Abstract artwork WES

Picturing God in relation to the world

You will need: a large sheet of paper, strips of coloured paper, glue sticks, pieces of fabric, copies of Isaiah 40:21-31.

- Use the materials to build up a picture of God in relation to the world from the passage description.
- Use different colours to indicate emotions and pay attention to the shades, shapes or textures that are used as you collaborate on this piece.
-  You could play 'From a distance', Nanci Griffith on *Lone Star State Of Mind* during this activity.

Or

Longest sentence acrostic WA

A fun way to recall that God remembers us


You will need: individual papers, each with one letter from the phrase 'You are not forgotten' written on it.

- Explain that you are going to try and formulate an 18-word sentence. Distribute the letters (in the correct order) – in small groups; individuals may receive several letters.
- Each person says a word beginning with their letter to add to the previous words and make a sentence.
- When the sentence is completed, reveal what the letters spell. Ask: How does that make you feel?

- If time allows, you could invite the young people to write an acrostic prayer using the word 'Remembered'.

Unforgettable rhythm WEA

A reminder that God loves everyone

-  Play 'I am not forgotten', Isreal Houghton, on *Alive in South Africa*.
- As the music plays, encourage the young people to beat or clap out rhythms in time to the music. Use percussion instruments if you have some. Help the young people to feel affirmed by the lyrics.
- Afterwards, reflect on how we value not being forgotten. Sensitive talk about who might be forgotten (the fatherless, friendless and hopeless mentioned in the song). Ask: How can we show people that they are not forgotten?

God loves them WES

Pray for those who feel nobody cares

- Talk about those who feel isolated or forgotten and together, make a list of people the young people want to pray for.
- Read the list as your prayer. After each item say: 'God remembers them' and invite the group to respond: **'God loves them'**.

Go with God

10 mins

- Give each member of the group a piece of fabric, the size of a large handkerchief.
- Explain that there used to be a tradition that you tied a knot in your handkerchief to remember something.
- Remind the young people that when they experience feelings of weariness or isolation, God is with them. Invite the group to tie a knot and reflect that God remembers us.
- Tie a second knot to remember that God is calling us.
- Finally, tie a third knot to imitate God and remember someone who might feel unloved or forgotten.

Go with God 24/7 WEA

Try to show someone that they are not forgotten using your phone, social media or visiting them, as appropriate.

The importance of witness and telling

Elijah had been God's messenger for a long time. Elijah was brave and spoke God's words even when it got him into trouble. He had an apprentice called Elisha ✱, who was learning to do God's work.

Elijah and Elisha travelled to Gilgal and Elijah said, 'You stay here. God wants me to go to Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you.' So, they went to Bethel. Then Elijah said, 'You stay here – God has sent me to the Jordan.' Elisha promised again that he would not leave Elijah.

They stood by the Jordan. Elijah rolled up his cloak and struck the water. It parted and the two of them crossed on dry ground. Elijah said, 'Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken from you.' Elisha answered, 'Let me receive double the spirit that you have.' ✱ Elijah answered, 'What you have asked is hard. But if you manage to see me being taken from you, it will be yours.'

As they walked on, a chariot of fire and horses of fire came down between them, and Elijah went up in a whirlwind to heaven. This is a powerful sign of the presence of God in this moment. Elisha kept watching and cried out, 'Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!' When he could no longer see Elijah, Elisha tore his clothes in two pieces ✱.

See session outline on p.42.

Stop and share

Read the story and pause at the ✱ to share these points with the children.

- ✱ Elijah was getting Elisha ready to carry on telling people about God.
- ✱ Elisha wants to be as close to God, and even closer, than Elijah has been.
- ✱ Elisha tears his clothes in sorrow because Elijah has gone.



Children

The importance of witness and telling

2 Kings 2.1-12 **WEB** Bible notes

As Elijah's time on earth comes to an end, his faithful disciple, Elisha, asks to inherit double what his master has that makes him a great prophet. Elijah is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind on a fiery chariot. Elisha witnesses this and receives Elijah's mantle, symbolizing his succession as a prophet.

Prepare and reflect

While this week typically marks the Transfiguration, we will look at the Old Testament story of Elijah, who was present at that mountain-top moment. Today's Isaiah passage tells of another glimpse of God, this time as Elisha witnesses Elijah return to heaven.

As you plan this session think about how you bear witness to God in your day-to-day life.

Our session uncovers the importance of Elisha's witness and enables the children to explore how they witness and tell the story. Help them to see that there are many ways to do this – how we act, what we tell others about God, how we spend our time or what we get involved in. All are important.

WEB Activity sheets, templates, links and images as needed.

Give out the **Thrive** resource to encourage family faith at home.

See **Songs** and **Prayers** on p.44.

For **Transfiguration resources**, based on Mark 9, see **WEB**.

Gather

10 mins

Use the activity and prayer to welcome the group.

My story

WE

- Ask the children if they can think of a recent adventure or day out or holiday they have been on.
- Challenge them to tell the rest of the group about this in one minute. Let everyone have a go if they wish. Today we hear a story of amazing adventure and discover the importance of telling and passing on.

All-loving God, we are here as witnesses to your love.
Be with us as we share and hear your Word.

Amen.

Share the Word

10 mins

Read the story on p.40 and explore the passage together.

Sandy story

WE

You will need: sand tray, two small world figures, small world horses, small box.

- Retell the story using a sand tray and small world people to represent Elijah and Elisha. Walk the figures as you tell the story.
- As they stop at each place, write the name in the sand and, as the characters leave each place, wipe the place name away. Place the horses, and a small box to represent the chariot, on the sand and then take Elijah and the horses away, leaving just Elisha.

Explore and respond

30 mins

Discover how the passage connects to daily life.

Draw what you see

WE

Explore how we can share the story

You will need: paper and pens, a selection of images or objects.

- Divide the group into pairs and stand them round the room. Gather together the first person from each pair and show them an image or object. Ask them then to return to their partner and describe it to them without telling them exactly what it is. Can the partner draw what was described?
- Look together at the images drawn. Do the pictures look like the objects described?
- Repeat the activity, asking everyone to draw. This time use the description of what Elisha saw. Look together at what is drawn. Elisha had to notice and remember to pass on the story of what he had witnessed.

Or, see **Map it out** **WEB**

Pass it on game

WESA

Think about telling and passing on

You will need: sticks or batons, paper and pens.

- Divide the group into teams to play a relay game about passing on the messages of God. Ask each team to think about what message they would like to pass on about God. They should create a baton and write the message on it.
- Have the relay race. Afterwards, ask how the children would tell God's story in their lives today. Create a new set of batons with these ideas on and play the relay again.



Under 5s

Read **Prepare and reflect**, and use the **Colouring sheet** WEB.
Play ideas: selection of toy phones.

Sing To the tune: *London's burning*

My God loves me, my God loves me,
 And I'm part of God's story.
 There's good news, there's good news!
 Let's tell others, let's tell others!

Share the story

Walk round the room, as you tell the story, stopping and going as Elijah and Elisha do.

Elijah and Elisha were God's messengers. God sent Elijah on a journey.

'Wait here,' Elijah said.

But Elisha said, 'No.'

Elijah and Elisha carried on their journey.

'Wait here,' Elijah said.

But Elisha said, 'No.'

Elijah and Elisha journeyed to the river.

'Wait here,' Elijah said.

But Elisha said, 'No.'

Suddenly, God sent a fiery chariot, and Elijah was taken to heaven.

Elisha said, 'I will tell everyone what I saw.'

Pass on the good news

Take a large soft ball and write 'God' on it or stick on a label saying 'God'. Move round the room throwing and passing the ball to each other. Remind the children that we all need to pass to others the good news about God.

Fiery chariot art

Ask the children to think of things they love that God has created or done. This might include things in the natural world, their family and friends or places they love.

Take a large sheet of paper and draw a chariot outline, writing the children's ideas on it. Around the paper place pots of sparkly shiny shapes, paint, tissue paper and other craft items. Encourage the children to create a fiery chariot.

Balloon prayers

Pass inflated balloons to each other as you pray:

Help us to tell and pass on the stories of God.
Amen.

Sing Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

Sandy story activity.

Talk together and talk to God

Discuss the theme, then bring your thoughts together in prayer.

- Can you think of a time when something happened that you couldn't wait to tell others about?
- Why do you think Elisha kept walking with Elijah?
- What are the stories about God that you want to tell?

Prayer walk

W E A

Focus on passing on and telling the story

- Go on a prayer walk round the room together. Explain that you are going to walk round the space pausing at different points. At each point you will say a line and encourage the children to join in, saying: 'Help us to tell your story.' Explain that there will be a pause for quiet prayer/reflection before they move on.
- Begin walking forward, stopping and then moving on, using the prompts below:
 Lord, sometimes it is easy to pass the story on and we have lots to tell of you. **Help us to tell your story.**
 Sometimes it is difficult to pass the story on. We don't know what to say or how. **Help us to tell your story.**
 Sometimes we know what we want to tell but can't seem to find the time. **Help us to tell your story.**
- Finish by saying: 'Wherever we are and in whatever way we can, help us to tell your story'. **Amen.**

Go with God

10 mins

Reflect on the week's theme and what it means for everyday faith.

- Reflect together on the ways we tell and witness to God's story. Write words/phrases on different pieces of paper to show these and spread them out. Ask the children to choose one that they think is a good way to share God's story.
- Give everyone a luggage label to write this on. The labels can be used as a bookmark, bag tag or put in the back of their phone as a reminder to keep telling and witnessing.

Go with God 24/7

E A

Put faith into action.

This week, find one time when you can show others something of God in what you do or say.



Songs and Prayers

Sing WEB Music links

0-5s

This little light of mine

5-11s

Tell everybody 'bout Jesus, Lifeway Kids
These are the days of Elijah
It's love, it's love, it's love that makes the world
go round

12+

Tell the world, Hillsong Worship, *God He Reigns*
How far I'll, Disney's *Moana*

Pray WEB Welsh translations

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Thank you, God, for sharing the love of Christ
with us,
and giving us the freedom to share this love with
the world.

Amen.

A prayer for forgiveness

*Ask the group to reflect on a time when they have
held back from telling others about their faith.
Pray for forgiveness, and strength to tell others
about Christ.*

A prayer for others

We're going to be witnesses,
we're going to tell the world,
of the love of Jesus and his mighty Word.
We're going to reach the corners,
the North, South, East and West,
and say the love of Jesus really is the best!

Amen.

Youth

The importance of witness and telling

2 Kings 2:1-12 and Mark 9:2-9 WEB Bible notes

As Elijah's time on earth comes to an end, his faithful disciple, Elisha, asks to inherit double what his master has that makes him a great prophet. Elijah is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind on a fiery chariot. Elisha witnesses this and receives Elijah's mantle, symbolizing his succession as a prophet.

Prepare and reflect

Today we hear two stories about those who witnessed something of God. Our focus is the Old Testament story of Elisha beholding Elijah on a fiery chariot. Elijah appears in a New Testament reading too, at the Transfiguration.

As a youth leader, each time you meet with your youth group you are witnessing and telling the story. Pause and notice how important this is. Are there other places you witness to God's story?

During this session, help the young people to think about how they witness to and tell God's story in their day-to-day lives, noticing that they will all do this in different ways.

WEB Check-in: a weekly biblical reflection on youth and contemporary culture. **Thrive:** A resource to encourage family faith at home. **Links, templates, images, and tracks.**

Gather

10 mins

Pass it on

WE

- Encourage the group to sit together in a circle. Ask one of the young people to chooses a phrase and whisper it to the next who then passes this on, whispering to the next until everyone has heard the phrase. Ask the last person to hear the whispered phrase to repeat it. Was the message passed on correctly?

Share the Word

10 mins

RCL Transfiguration Year B: **2 Kings 2:1-12**;
Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; **Mark 9:2-9**

Graphic story

WS

You will need: large sheet of paper, pens.

- Sit round the paper together and listen to the Old Testament passage; read it three times. Ask the group to make a graphic recording of the story together. As they hear the story, they should record it in images, words and colour. You could also do this with the Gospel reading, if you choose.



First impressions WEB

Questions on the theme.


- What stands out for you in the story of Elisha and Elijah?
- When have you caught a glimpse of the glory of God?
- How do this week's transfiguration stories challenge or encourage you?

Explore and respond 30 mins

Witness to the story? WESA

Explore where we see God witnessed to around us

You will need: pens and paper, or mobile phones.

- Explain that we can see glimpses of God and faith in the things around us – posters, objects, information and much more besides. Offer an example.
- Send the young people off on a hunt round the building using phones or pens and paper to collect images, words and places where they see God's story being told, witnessed to and passed on. Come back together and share these.
-  Play 'Witness', Jordan Felix, during this activity.

Or

Recreating game ES

Think about retelling and passing on

You will need: play dough or building blocks.

- Using play dough or building bricks, ask one young person to make something (you might prompt an idea) without anyone seeing.
- Give everyone else the same equipment and allow them one minute to look at the creation. Then challenge the group to recreate it. How easy was it to recreate when you had only had a glimpse? Elisha told many of the glimpse he saw.


My story WS

A challenge to think about what we say of God

- Ask the young people to think about what they would want to tell or witness to, about God. Encourage them to jot down some ideas.
- Then set this challenge: If you had to tell of God in only six words, what would you say? Allow time for everyone's story to be heard. Emphasise that there are no right or wrongs in this; we will all 'tell' in different ways.

The story I tell WESA

Reflecting on how we witness and tell others

- Remind the young people that we are all still called to witness and tell, even if we haven't seen chariots of fire! Ask everyone to find a space to sit comfortably and reflect with God on what it is they want to tell and how they best bear witness to their faith.
-  As they do so, play 'Just a Glimpse', Rend Collective on *As Family We Go*.

Go with God

10 mins

- Lay out a selection of images or objects that reflect some of the special events this week and some of the day-to-day. These might include Racial Justice Sunday, Valentine's Day, Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, school or college, half-term activities, exams or revision.
- Ask the young people to think about how they could tell or witness to, in words or actions or stories or other, something of God's story in one of these situations or times. Encourage them to select the object or image that relates to the time they have chosen and hold it as they reflect on how they will do this.

Go with God 24/7 WEA

This week find at least one occasion when you can tell of – or witness to – God in your own way.

God's good news of a covenant

Noah and his family built a large wooden boat. God had called Noah to build this boat called the ark and to take on board some of every type of animal on the earth, to rescue them from a huge flood.

It rained and rained and the flood waters rose. After many months, the water level dropped and Noah and his family were able to step out onto dry land. There was just Noah and his family and the creatures who had been rescued. They had to start life all over again.

Then God spoke and gave a covenant ✨ – a promise – that would last forever and be for every living creature on the earth: God promised that there would never again be a flood like this one that had spread over the whole earth.

The sign of God's promise was to be a rainbow against the clouds ✨. Throughout all generations, whenever there was a rainbow after the rain, it would be a sign of God's solemn promise made this day to every living creature on the earth. The rainbow would always be a reminder of God's covenant to Noah and to all the creatures of the earth ✨.

See session outline on p.48.

Stop and share

Read the story and pause at the ✨ to share these points with the children.

- ✨ A covenant is a solemn promise. Here God does not expect anything back from Noah. Later on, in the time of Moses, God makes a covenant with people that involves a commitment on both sides.
- ✨ The rainbow is a symbol of God's promise.
- ✨ The rainbow still reminds us today of God's promise.



Children

God's good news of a covenant

Genesis 9:8-17 **WEB** Bible notes

After the flood, God tells Noah that a covenant is to be made with all living creatures, that there will never be another event like the flood, in which God destroys everything and begins again. The rainbow is a sign and a reminder of this covenant.

Prepare and reflect

God flooded the earth because the world was full of violence. We read of God's covenant with Noah to never again destroy all the people on earth by a flood.

And yet there have been devastating floods in recent times. Does this mean that God has gone back on that covenant? What other factors, such as climate change, are involved? Does God still punish people for evil acts?

Children may have several ideas about the significance of the rainbow, and it might be helpful to explore these before sharing the story. Some children may feel that promises are easily made and broken – not of lasting value. This is an opportunity to reinforce the role of God and the significance of the everlasting covenant as a development of this well-known story.

WEB Activity sheets, templates, links and images as needed.

Give out the **Thrive** resource to encourage family faith at home.

See **Songs** and **Prayers** on p.50.

Gather

10 mins

Use the activity and prayer to welcome the group.

Rainbow order

ES

You will need: a mess of pens and pencils, picture of a rainbow.

- Ask the children to sort the objects so they are ready for easy use. Try to put the items into the order of the rainbow.
- Next, see if they can find examples of the colours of the rainbow on socks, logos, etc. Then invite everyone to make a human rainbow – standing in order of the colour they can contribute. Several may contribute blue, but ask if it matters if there is no violet, for example.

We gather, oh Lord, on this new day.

We gather, oh Lord, at this new hour.

We gather, oh Lord, to hear the good news.

We gather, oh Lord, to receive your amazing love.

Amen.

Share the Word

10 mins

Read the story on p.46 and explore the passage together.

Handy reminder

WS

- Introduce three hand movements for all to join in when they hear the appropriate words:

Built/build: put one fist on top of the other.

Promise: put hand on heart.

Rainbow: draw a rainbow arch in the air.

Explore and respond

30 mins

Discover how the passage connects to daily life.

Rainbow spinner

ES

Make a reminder of God's promise

You will need: 12cm discs of plain card, paint and brushes or felt tips, 40cm lengths of wool/string, pencil and sticky tack.

- Invite everyone to colour their disc with random splodges of the colours of the rainbow.
- Make two holes 4cm apart from the middle of the disc pushing the pencil through onto sticky tack.
- Thread the wool through the holes and tie the ends to make a long loop.
- Holding the ends of the loop in each hand, the disc can be wound up. When released, what do the children notice about the colours? Talk about the rainbow God's promise as a sign to care for us.

Or, see **Edible rainbows** **WEB**

The 'fresh start' game

ES

'Losers' are given a fresh chance to re-join the fun

You will need: music source.

- Play Musical Statues, eliminating people if they move from their 'frozen' pose when the music stops. After a few goes, call out 'Fresh Start' and invite the 'losers' back into the action. Repeat several times.
- Discuss how it feels to be knocked out of a game and how it feels to be invited to play once more. Point out that God invites us all back to play even when we make mistakes and do wrong things as part of God's covenant promise to us through Noah.

Under 5s



Biscuit blessings activity.

Talk together and talk to God

Discuss the theme, then bring your thoughts together in prayer.

- How do you feel if people do not keep their promises?
- How does it feel to see a rainbow in the sky?
- What difference does it make to know that God always keeps the covenant promise?

Pause to reflect

W E S A

A quiet reflection on the story of the rainbow

- Invite everyone to sit or lie comfortably in their own space as they listen to the words.

Faithful God, you brought the flood and you gave your rainbow promise to love us. We pray for people who have been flooded out of their homes.

Faithful God, you give us fresh water to drink and keep us clean. We pray for people who don't have clean water.

Faithful God, you hate violence and cruelty but you always give us the chance of a fresh start.

Faithful God, thank you for your promise that you are always with us. **Amen.**

Go with God

10 mins

Reflect on the week's theme and what it means for everyday faith.

- Sit in a circle with a picture of a rainbow in the middle. Ask: Why did God put the sign of the rainbow in the sky after the huge flood? Discuss how it feels to see a rainbow when it has been raining. Ask if God's promise to give us a fresh start when we need it, and to always love us, is still true. Invite ideas for how to remember that God loves us, and even the people we find difficult to like, this week.

Almighty God, as you sent out the dove to search for new hope, help us to go out into your world, to be the new hope and spread the good news to all. **Amen.**

Go with God 24/7

E S

Put faith into action.

When you see a rainbow, in the sky or a picture, remember that God loves you.

Read **Prepare and reflect**, and use the **Colouring sheet** WEB.

Play ideas: selection of toy phones.

Sing To the tune: *I can sing a rainbow*

God of promises, God of love,
hear your people's cry:
We pray for your planet,
and its creatures;
help us show your love.

Share the story

Paint a large rainbow as you tell the story.

God said to Noah, 'I will make you a promise, a very special promise, a promise to you, to everyone, to the animals and the birds.

Never again will the world be destroyed by a flood.' 'In the sky I will put a rainbow as a reminder of that special promise.'

Rainbow sticks

Tie strips of coloured material to a bamboo cane, for each child. Explain that you are going to celebrate that, whatever we do, we can start again with God. Play some praise music as you move and wave the rainbow sticks together.

Biscuit blessings

Make rainbow biscuits using round biscuits and white icing. Provide lots of small, coloured sweets and encourage the children to fix them on in a rainbow shape. Take your biscuits to share with others as you tell them of God's special promise of a fresh start.

Chalk prayers

Stand round a blackboard with chalks and ask everyone to scribble, as you pray:

Sometimes, God, we get in a muddle and get things wrong.

Rub out the scribbles and draw a heart, as you pray:

Thank you that we can always start again with you.

Amen.

Sing To the tune: *Frère Jacques*

God has promised,
unto me,
I can make a new start,
thanks to God.



Songs and Prayers

Sing WEB Music links

0-5s

'Whenever you see a rainbow' – final chorus of Mister Noah built an ark (JP 167)

5-11s

I am a new creation
God's promise is a rainbow, Funky Frog
God is Amazing
Earth's creator, ev'ryday God (StF 45)

12+

One thing remains, Jesus culture, *One thing remains*
Your destiny, Kevin Lavar
Unconditional, Rend Collective, *Choose to Worship*

Pray WEB Welsh translations

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

With a bag of Skittles™ or other colour sweets, use each colour to say thank you for different things:

Red – *someone you love*

Yellow – *things that make you happy*

Blue – *thanks for bringing us through sad times*

Green – *our planet.*

A prayer for forgiveness

Father God, when we've done wrong,
you wash these things away.

When we do things that hurt our world,
you forgive.

Thank you for the fresh starts you offer us
so that we may grow in faith.

Amen.

A prayer for others

To the tune: *I can sing a rainbow*

God of promises, God of love,

hear your people's cry:

We pray for your planet,
and its creatures;

help us show your love.

Amen.

Youth

God's good news of a covenant

Genesis 9:8-17 WEB Bible notes

After the flood, God tells Noah that a covenant is to be made with all living creatures, that there will never be another event like the flood, in which God destroys everything and begins again. The rainbow is a sign and a reminder of this covenant.

Prepare and reflect

The story of Noah and his family being saved in the ark is familiar but the flood resulting from disobedience to God's way is less well-known. Young people will be aware of the rise in international flooding disasters resulting from climate change and may need the reassurance of a rainbow's appearance and God's covenant. This may chime for you, too. Return to this strand through the session.

This session comes at the beginning of Lent, a season of reflection and renewal. The fresh start indicated here may link with making resolutions for Lent, even as the New Year ones may have melted away.

WEB Check-in: a weekly biblical reflection on youth and contemporary culture. **Thrive:** A resource to encourage family faith at home. **Links, templates, images, and tracks.**

Gather

10 mins

Now and then

ESA

You will need: pictures of floods, a toy Noah's Ark (optional).

- Look at the pictures and discuss whether floods are a recent phenomenon. Acknowledge that the number and severity of floods has increased, although they have happened throughout history.
- Invite ideas of why God instructed Noah to build the Ark and ask if they know what happens next in the story.

Share the Word

10 mins

RCL Lent 1 Year B: **Genesis 9:8-17**; Psalm 25:1-10;
1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

Important to me?

WE

You will need: A4 paper, pens.

- Read the passage once. Then, invite everyone to create a memory map or picture diagram (to share an example with the young people, see: <https://dcmlearning.ie/video-content/what-is-mind-mapping-%28and-how-to-get-started-immediately%29.html>) as the passage is read again.
- As they listen, invite everyone to highlight phrases on their diagrams/ maps that mention of God's covenant or promise. Discuss the different maps produced.



First impressions WEB

Questions on the theme.

- This valley flowers every three to ten years and only after a flood – what thoughts does that stir in you?
- Why is the rainbow after 'The Flood' a sign of God's covenant?
- What does God's promise mean to you?

Explore and respond 30 mins

Nobody's out E

A game where no one loses, to illustrate God's unconditional promise

You will need: music source (you could use the suggested tracks in *Sing*), A4 sheets in separate colours of the rainbow.

- Play an elimination game such as musical rainbow (like musical chairs but using coloured sheets of paper to stand on). After a couple of rounds when some people have been knocked out, invite them back into the game. Repeat until it becomes obvious that there are no 'losers'. Discuss how it felt to be invited back into the game.

Or

Beyond the clouds WESA

A way to set problems against God's promise in the rainbow

You will need: materials to create a large rainbow on a backing sheet (paints or sheets of coloured paper) plus white paper for clouds; pens, scissors, glue sticks.

- Work together to make a giant rainbow. Discuss situations in the world where God's promise needs to be remembered. Write the situations onto cloud shapes cut from paper and stick these onto the rainbow.

Flood alert! E A


Discuss our response to God's promise of unconditional love

- Ask how we feel when we see images of bad flooding with people losing their homes and livelihoods. Where does God's promise of unconditional love fit with such scenes of devastation? What are the ways we can respond to such crises?

Wash and go ESA

Reflect on the cleansing of the flood and the new start of the covenant

You will need: handwashing equipment, rainbow picture.

- Remind everyone that the flood happened because of the wrong things that had been done. After the flood came God's forgiveness for Noah and the promise of the rainbow. Now offer the chance for everyone to wash their hands as a sign of things they want to confess and say sorry for (unspoken).
-  Play 'Fresh Start', Ryan Stevenson on *Fresh Start*.
- Finally, direct attention to the picture of the rainbow and remind everyone of God's faithful promise.

Go with God

10 mins

- Look again at the images of floods and discuss how they make people feel. Then overlay a rainbow picture. How does God's promise of unconditional love and acceptance, with the assurance of a fresh start, feel for the group? Invite everyone to pause to remember that God loves them no matter what they do. How does God's covenant apply to those affected by flooding? Should this change the way we live and what we consume each day?

Go with God 24/7 E A

Take one small action to reduce your climate footprint to help reduce the risk of floods.

Trusting God when we don't understand

Abram was a man who lived his life according to a special dream. He was sure that God had promised him a place in history – that he would live in a land called Canaan and it would become his country. *

Abram believed that he would have so many children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren that he would be the father of a whole new nation living in Canaan.

Sometimes it was hard to believe this promise when he and his wife Sarai had no children of their own and no land of their own.

When Abram was 99 years old, God appeared to him again and said, 'I am God Almighty, live your life thinking of me and do nothing wrong. I make a promise between you and me that you will have more grandchildren, great-grandchildren and relatives than you can count. You will be the ancestor of many nations. Your name won't be "Abram" any longer but "Abraham". * This promise will be for all your family forever. Your wife Sarai will become "Sarah". * I will bless her, and she will give birth to your son. Together you will start the family line of many nations, even of royal families and kings.'

See session outline on p.54.

Stop and share

Read the story and pause at the * to share these points with the children.

- * God had made a promise to Abram a long time ago and Abram kept on trusting that somehow it would come true.
- * Abram means 'special father' and Abraham means 'father of many'. Although Abram was so old, God saw that he would have many grandchildren.
- * Sarai means 'quarrelsome', and Sarah means 'princess'.



Children

Trusting God when we don't understand

Genesis 17:1-7,15-16 **WEB** Bible notes

God makes a covenant with Abram, in which Abram and his wife Sarai (both in their nineties), will become the ancestors of many nations and peoples, including their leaders, and an example of great faith. They are renamed Abraham and Sarah and promised the birth of a son – this is a great blessing because they had not previously been able to have children.

Prepare and reflect

God made a covenant with Abram, promising to make him the ancestor of many descendants. Now God repeats that promise and in return Abram agrees to walk before God and be blameless. Abram has a choice, just as we can choose to obey God, or not.

The Bible records that God, and Jesus, make many promises to us. Abram clung to the promise of descendants that he received through serious challenges. Is there a Bible promise that is of particular value to you?

The promise of grandchildren may seem remote to children so an easier route into the story may be that God sees things differently to us. This is shown in the way God adapts the names Abram and Sarai, chosen by their parents, to names that fit with God's purposes. That God sees things differently may be an encouragement to children.

WEB Activity sheets, templates, links and images as needed.

Give out the **Thrive** resource to encourage family faith at home.

See **Songs** and **Prayers** on p.56.

Gather

10 mins

Use the activity and prayer to welcome the group.

We don't know why!

W S

You will need: a mess of pens and pencils, picture of a rainbow.

- Invite everyone to do the actions and to join in the refrain in bold.
Stand straight up, turn around and then sit down.
We don't know why!
Head between your knees, now pretend to sneeze.
We don't know why!
Hop upon one leg, act like a dog to beg. **We don't know why!**
Pat your head, rub your nose, stand up on your tippytoes.
We don't know why!
Draw your arms and legs in, we're ready to begin! **That is why!**

We come to you with questions, God:
Things we don't understand.
Open our hearts to trust you
with our lives put in your hands.
Amen.

Share the Word

10 mins

Read the story on p.52 and explore the passage together.

Name signs

W S

You will need: individual signs for the names *Abram, Abraham, Sarai, Sarah, Canaan, God*.

- Share the name signs round the group. When the children hear a name read out, ask them to hold up the appropriate sign.

Explore and respond

30 mins

Discover how the passage connects to daily life.

Forfeits

E

A game to explore trust

You will need: cards with simple challenges (e.g. recite a nursery rhyme, sing Happy Birthday, hop round the room), container for cards.

- The cards contain challenges. Ask if anyone will trust you and undertake an unseen challenge by dipping into the container. Repeat until all who want to have had a go.
- Discuss whether it is easy to take such a challenge. What did it feel like? Ask if it is easier to trust someone that they know to set the challenges, or someone who is a stranger. How do they think Abram and Sarai felt?

Or

Name reminder

W S

Think about God changing names as part of a promise

You will need: A4 cards with outlines of the names 'Abram' and 'Sarai' on one side and 'Abraham' and 'Sarah' on the other; pens.

- Invite everyone to colour in, or decorate, the letters of the names.
- Talk about the significance of God changing the names to give Abram and Sarai a new way of looking at life and themselves.

Construction challenge

E S

Make models that other people may see differently

You will need: Lego™ or other construction set.

- Invite the children to work in pairs to build a small model.



Under 5s

Read **Prepare and reflect**, and use the **Colouring sheet** **WEB**.
Play ideas: selection of toy phones.

Sing Oh Wow! (Awesome God), Cheeky Pandas

Share the story

Make a set of paper chain people with 'Abraham' written on the first one. Unfold as you tell Abraham's story.

God said to Abram, 'I will make a special agreement with you.

I promise you will have children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren and many, many more.

I will be your God and I will be their God.

To show this I will change your name to Abraham.'

Journey

Take the children on a walking journey round the room that doesn't make sense! Give instructions such as walk forwards three steps, turn around and walk back again, walk the way you have come and more. Eventually lead them to a box filled with a snack or craft treat. Sometimes, like Abraham, we don't understand, but we can trust in God.

Promise

Take a large sheet of paper and write ABRAHAM across the middle. Provide trays of paint and people-shaped cookie or play dough cutters. Remind the children of God's agreement with Abraham. Can they print people all around Abraham to show this?

Portrait prayers

Ask the children to draw a picture of themselves, as you pray,

Sometimes we might not know what is happening but we know that [*name each child*], just like Abraham, can trust in you.

Amen.

Sing To the tune: *Hickory dickory dock*

We have a friend we can trust,
who shows us that faith is a must.
When things get tough, and life feels rough,
walk even closer to God.

Name signs activity.

- They should then take turns to show, but not describe, their model to the rest of the group. What do others think they have created? Do they have a different view from the makers?
- Discuss how God did not see Abram and Sarai as too old to have a family, and how God often sees us differently to how we're viewed by the people around us.

Talk together and talk to God

W E S A

Discuss the theme, then bring your thoughts together in prayer.

- Has anyone ever called you by a different name to your real name?
- How did it feel to Abram and Sarai to have their name changed?
- Is there anyone you know that God might like you to see differently?

Pause to pray

E A

A time of silent prayer to get a different view

- Invite the group to lie on the floor in their own space. Explain that we often use lots of words when we pray but that it is also good to be silent in God's presence. We may not hear from God if we are too busy talking.
- Explain that you will count down from five and then there will be an opportunity to listen to God for a couple of minutes.
- At the end of the silence, invite everyone to sit up in their own time, then ask if anyone has anything they want to share from their listening.

Go with God

10 mins

Reflect on the week's theme and what it means for everyday faith.

- Show the name cards for Abram and Sarai. Ask the children what surprised them about the story. Which part do they want to remember? How would they react if God suggested changing their name? Or making a huge promise to them? How would they know that it was God speaking? Invite suggestions for how they could listen to God more closely this week. Explain that practising listening to God helps develop our understanding of God's plans.

We thank you that you are a God we can trust.
Help us to keep the covenant with you, following your path,
so that our generation may know your love. **Amen.**

Go with God 24/7

W E S A

Put faith into action.

Spend more time listening, rather than talking to God to learn more about God's plans.



Songs and Prayers

Sing WEB Music links

0-5s

Be still and know that I am God,
verse 3: 'In you, Lord God, I put my trust'
Father Abraham

5-11s

I do not know what lies ahead
Coming home to you, Fischy Music
Father, I place into your hands

12+

Trust in you, Lauren Daigle
The Lord's My Shepherd, Stuart Townend
God of the promise, Elevation Worship

Pray WEB Welsh translations

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Take it in turns to create a freeze image or mime of a time when God has done something special in your life when you had not expected it. Close by saying **'thank you'** when all have had a turn.

A prayer for forgiveness

Play reflective music and invite the children to think about moments in life when it was hard to trust God. Seek forgiveness and ask for strength to trust God more.

A prayer for others

For those living in darkness:
Let your light shine.
For those who are unaware of your light:
Let your light shine.
We pray Lord Jesus that your people, wherever they are on their faith journey, may change their perspectives and draw close to you and your light.
Let your light shine.
Amen.

Youth

Trusting God when we don't understand

Genesis 17:1-7,15-16 WEB Bible notes

After the flood, God tells Noah that a covenant is to be made with all living creatures, that there will never be another event like the flood, in which God destroys everything and begins again. The rainbow is a sign and a reminder of this covenant.

Prepare and reflect

God promises Abram that he will have many descendants. This seems unlikely as Abram and his wife, Sarai, are old. Abraham, as God renames him, is key in the founding stories of Judaism and Islam so that Christianity, Judaism and Islam are known as the Abrahamic religions.

Just as God instructs Abram to walk blamelessly before him, so Jesus tells his followers to take up their cross. Are there times when you have been aware of the cost of being a Christian? Are there downsides to being a follower of Jesus? It might feel risky to trust God when we don't fully understand; but perhaps what is asked of us is a change of perspective.

God's view of life can be very different to ours. We must learn to trust God. Can we offer our young people a different perspective at a stage of life when things can seem black-and-white?

WEB Check-in: a weekly biblical reflection on youth and contemporary culture. **Thrive:** A resource to encourage family faith at home. **Links, templates, images, and tracks.**

Gather

10 mins

What can you see?

S

You will need: several pictures of optical illusions (search online for these).

- Invite the group to decide what they can see in each illustration. Does everyone see the same thing? Is there a single right answer?

Share the Word

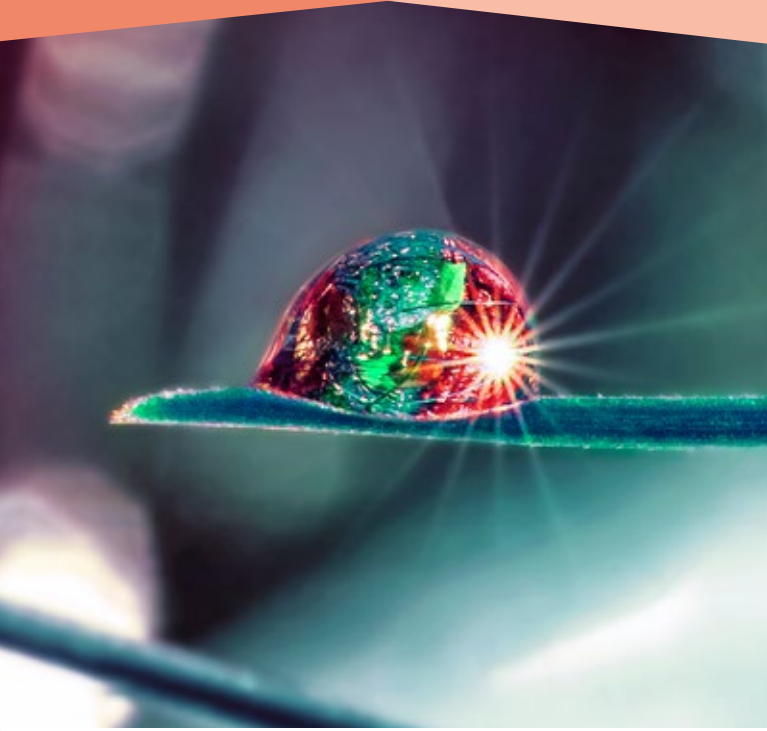
10 mins

RCL Lent 2 Year B: **Genesis 17:1-7,15-16**; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38

Act it out

WS

- Give out copies of the passage and help volunteers to enact the reading: One person is Abram, standing ready. The narrator reads and a second person – as God – appears on cue. Abram falls to his knees as God speaks. God stands Abram up and turns him around as his name is changed. Someone as Sarai appears to one side as she is mentioned, and God turns her around too as she is renamed.
- Emphasise the changes involved when we trust God.
- Play and reflect together on the lyrics of 'Promises', (feat. Joe L Barnes & Naomi Raine), Maverick City Music/TRIBL.



First impressions WEB

Questions on the theme.

- What do you think this is?
- How can we trust God, when we do not fully understand God's ways?
- *Find out what the image is at the foot of the page.*

Explore and respond 30 mins

Picture consequences ES

A drawing game to show how the group sees everyone in it.

You will need: A4 paper, pens.

- Give everyone a sheet of paper. Invite the young people to draw the head of someone in the room on the top third of the paper. They then fold the top sixth over to cover their drawing.
- Everyone hands on their sheet and draws the body of someone in the room on the middle third of the paper. Again, fold down from the top so nothing is on show.
- Again, hand the paper on and everyone draws the legs and feet of someone in the room and folds the paper over. Put all the completed drawings into a heap. Take turns to select a drawing and try to work out whose head, body or legs it shows.
- Talk about how we see each other and how God might draw us.

Or, see **Community improvement** WEB

Abraham the Dad! EA

Think about Abraham as a founder of faiths

You will need: large sheet of paper with 'God' written at the top and 'Abraham' underneath, pens.

- Explain that, thanks to his trust in God, Abraham is revered as a founding father of both Judaism and Islam, as well as being a significant person for Christians. This is one way in which the three religions are bound together and can give a new perspective.

- Invite everyone to add their own name to the paper with a line joining it to 'Abraham'. What difference does it make to know that they, and everyone who accepts the invitation to faith in God, are Abraham's descendants? How could this affect perspectives towards people of other faiths?

Different perspectives ES

A quiet reflection about ourselves

You will need: A4 sheet of tissue or thin paper for each person.

- Invite the group to fold/scrunch/sculpt their sheet of paper to represent themselves. Pray:

Loving God, this is how we see ourselves today.
Thank you that you always love us.

Now invite everyone to smooth out the paper so that it looks different.

Pray:

Loving God, thank you that you see us differently: full of potential and love. Teach us to trust you when we do not understand your ways. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Go with God 10 mins

- Discuss how we see ourselves, how we portray ourselves and if God has the same perspective.
- Ask: How truthful are the images that people post of themselves on social media? Does this apply to just celebrities or to the people we know around us? Does anyone use the BeReal app?
- Point out that God saw Abram as a man with potential while Abram saw himself and Sarai as old. Discuss whether God sees each of us differently from our self-image. What difference does it make to know God has a different perspective of us? Can we trust God when we do not see or understand that different perspective?

Go with God 24/7 EA

Consider signing up to the BeReal app to share real-life perspectives – just as God sees us.

Racial Justice Sunday

11 Feb 2024



In our latest edition of *Discovering God*, Ruth Akinradewo suggests ways for you to explore Racial Justice with all ages.

WEB rootsforchurches.com/racialjustice

These resources complement the Racial Justice Sunday materials produced by our ecumenical partner, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland: ctbi.org.uk



Have you been given this magazine to try?

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