

Rooted in God's love Primary School leavers' service

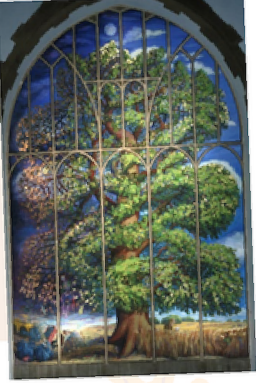
Children, Families & Youth Missioner at the Diocese of Chelmsford, Emma Anderson, explores the important milestone students face as they transition in education.

The move from primary to secondary school can be daunting for many children. By offering a leavers' service, churches can strengthen links between church and school while supporting children by celebrating and marking this change in the wider context of faith.

Prepare

This Primary School leavers' service uses the imagery of a tree to reflect on seasonal changes and God's presence with us in transitions. You may want to use an image of a tree with leaves in many seasons as a focal point, for example the Tree of Life from Chelmsford Cathedral: <https://www.facebook.com/chelmsfordcathedral/photos/a.240699155134437/3191451990958724/?type=2> (see image right).

Here is an interview with the artist, Mark Cazalet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpneOKMktM8>



Gather

As children enter, play 'A Time for Everything', Misha Goetz. Introduce yourself and welcome the pupils and staff.

Opening Blessing

Leader: This is the day that the Lord has made. **All:** We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Leader: I want to ask you all a question. If you didn't know the date, how do you know when it's getting to be the end of the school year? (Discuss in pairs and hear a few answers, e.g. My birthday is coming, my friends are leaving, my class is finishing, etc.)

Share the Word

Leader: As the seasons change and a tree grows and changes, so we grow and change.

Children to read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Talk

Time for re-potting

You will need: plant in a pot, larger pot, compost, stones, water, gloves, tarpaulin or black bags for the floor.

Let's sing together. (You may want to use songs from Some Good Music/Out of the Ark, as many of these are used in schools.)

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Primary School leavers' service - July/August 2024



Explore and respond

Choose from the following response activities (see pages 3-6). It may not be practical to do them all, but provide suitable quantities so that all the children and staff can engage with more than one. The eight activities are divided into the following sections:

- Spring - Memories and achievements representing the past
- Summer - Wait in this space representing the present
- Autumn - Who will you be? representing the future

They can be set up as self-directed stations around your space. Depending on your group, you may want school staff or church volunteers to monitor or help with some activities. If you do fewer stations, try to pick one from each of the three seasons. To avoid crowding, encourage groups of children to move from station to station, marking the time to move every five minutes. Encourage the children to take the things they've made home with them as a reminder of the service. There are templates and printouts for each station at the end of these resources.




Service outline

Including

- prayers
- song ideas
- worship activities
- a full talk script

Autumn - Who will you be?

Fingerprint trees

You will need: tree image for each pupil (see p16), ink pads, wipes, printout of instructions (see p10) to display at this station.

- Each of our fingerprints are unique and so are we and all our experiences shape us. Fruit takes time to ripen on a tree.
- How do you think you have grown and changed in your time at primary school?
- Make a fingerprint tree with fruit and leaves, and think about the ways in which you have grown and changed.

Friendships

You will need: cutout paper figures (see p13), pencils, printout of instructions (see p12) to display at this station.

- Think about your friends: Who are your friends now? How long have you been friends? Do you see them in and outside the school? Think about why you like these friends and how they make you feel.
- On your person shape, write who your friends are now and why you like them.
- Now you are moving onto secondary school, you may leave these friends behind and make new friends, and this is okay.
- Think about how you are as a friend now. When you go to a new school, how would you like to be as a friend? Everyone in your school will be starting from new so will that help you to make friends?
- On the other side of your person shape, write some ideas about what sort of friend you want to be. Think of some words to describe a good friend.

From the treetops

You will need: pictures of trees, paper leaves, pencils, printout of instructions (see p14) to display at this station.

- If you stand and look up to the top of a tall tree, it can seem a long way away. We can feel small. But just imagine climbing to the top of that tree and looking out ahead of you instead. What could you see? Our perspective changes how we feel.
- Look at the different tree images and choose a tree image that represents how you feel now.
- Have a chat with your friend about your hopes and fears for the future.
- Draw or write on the leaves how you feel about the next step.
- Keep the leaf and revisit your feelings in a few months and see if things have changed.

Go with God

- Gather everyone back together by playing 'Time for Everything', Misha Goetz.
- Include a suitable worship song at this point.
- Prayers and reflections from pupils: invite 4 or 5 children who have pre-written prayers to read at the service.
- Presentation of gifts (optional): give a token gift to each child.

Closing Blessing


Living God, we thank you for the time we have spent together. We are grateful for our friends, our time of prayer, but we have some things to say.

As our children start a new stage in their journey, may their friends, and new ones, be true friends. Above all, we pray for your family, and for your love, wherever they go and wherever they do.

Sending out

Leader: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: In the name of Christ. Amen.



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Rooted in God's love – Primary School leavers' service
Spring – Memories and achievements
Activity: Nature collage

Spring – Memories and achievements

Nature collage



Life is full of different experiences. Some are good, some are not so good. All these experiences – the good and the bad – shape us and make us into who we are today.

- Think back over your time at primary school and have a look at the different natural items. Take any items you would like to use and make a collage of them on paper.

Stones are hard and heavy.
What are the things that you have found hard and heavy during your time at primary school? Maybe a friendship didn't work out or there is something that you just didn't enjoy.

Rosemary is soft and has a fragrance.
What are the good times you remember – the times that make you smile? Maybe you are good at sport, music, or art and enjoyed doing those things. Or being in a school play or going on a trip. Maybe you have friends who are special.

Leaves are full of life. They take sunlight and make it into food.
What has given you energy and joy at primary school? Have you had a particularly encouraging teacher? What subjects do you really enjoy?


Twisty willow. Life is full of twist and turns – we often find new friends, experiences, or talents along the way.
What has surprised you at primary school? Did something happen that you did not expect?

- Create a collage using the materials provided.
- Ask an adult to take a picture then put the materials back for others to use.

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Summer – Wait in this space
Activity: Memory twigs

Summer – Wait in this space

Memory twigs



- Reflect on some of your memories from primary school:
 - a happy memory is...
 - I am good at...
 - a challenge was...
 - my friends are...
 - my best subject is...
 - the best school trip was...
 - on my first day...
 - (write down some ideas if it helps)
- As you think of each memory, choose a colour of wool to represent that memory.
- Starting with your first memory, wrap the colour wool you chose around a section of your twig. Repeat, until all your memories are represented on the twig.
- Spend a moment being grateful for the memories you have been able to make at primary school.

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For the worship activities we include 11 ready-made activity sheets, grouped into:

Spring
Memories and achievements representing the past

Summer
Wait in this space representing the present


Autumn
Who will you be? representing the future

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Autumn – Who will you be?
Activity: Fingerprint trees (page 2 of 2)

Autumn – Who will you be?

Fingerprint trees

Make a fingerprint tree by adding your own fingerprint fruit and leaves to this tree, and think about the ways in which you have grown and changed.



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