

“INTERNATIONAL RESCUE”

Using the Gospel of Luke with Children

INTRODUCTION

We are ministers of the Gospel with children and so, like all ministers of the Gospel, we need to reflect on scripture, and receive training. Every Church Year a different ‘synoptic’ Gospel (Matthew, Mark and Luke) forms the main stay of the lectionary. The beginning of a new year provides the opportunity to engage afresh with the year’s Gospel – to get excited about it at our own level, then convey our excitement by working on the Gospel with our children at *their* level. Accordingly, this pack begins with material aimed at an adult level, then moves to examples of activities for children.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GOSPELS

Why do the Synoptic Gospels vary in content? If individual members of a group were asked to choose three scenes from the Nativity story which illustrated the most important things they believed about Jesus, they might well choose different scenes because they wanted to emphasise different things. Is this what is happening in the Gospels when they differ from each other?

What happens when you want to emphasise a belief about Jesus, and you don’t have any material? Might it be possible that the Gospel writers, or their sources, used some imaginative illustrations of belief in places where information was lacking, or made use of Old Testament material? Does this account for some of the distinctive passages the different Gospels contain?

What other factors could account for differing content in the Gospels?

- **DATE** - when a Gospel was written can have an important effect on its special features (compare the difference in a piece of writing about the first world war written whilst it was going on, and one written 50 years later in the ‘flower power’ 60s);
- **AUDIENCE** - the people the Gospel was written for will affect its nature (we have already noted the importance of audience by dividing this pack into a part ‘for adults’ and one ‘for children’);
- **SOURCES** - the comprehensiveness of source material will determine what can be included in any representation of an event (if we only had Luke, there would be no Wise Men on our Christmas cards; and if we only had Mark, there would be no Christmas cards at all!)

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

DATING THE GOSPEL

One of the 'landmarks' in dating the Gospels is the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which we know from other sources took place in 70AD. The predictions of the fall of Jerusalem in Luke (19:43 and 21:20,24) give details that have led to the suggestion that they were written after the event – ie after 70AD. The Gospel of Mark, for instance – usually dated as before 70AD – has no equivalent to Lk 19:43, and the parallel passage to Lk 21:20-24 (Mk 13:14-20) lacks Luke's detail. Luke 21:9 speaks of 'commotions' (usually translated as insurrections or revolutions) whereas Mark 13:7 only speak of 'rumours' – another hint that when Luke was written, the rising may already have been history.

Other, later landmarks include the persecutions in the latter part of the Emperor Domitian's rule (90s AD) and the conflict between Church and Synagogue in the later 80s arising from reforms in Judaism. No references to these events have been detected in Luke, and so the Gospel is regarded as having been written before they took place.

In the light of these considerations, scholars generally date the writing of Luke's Gospel between 80 and 85AD – in other words, about 50 years after the events described.

AUDIENCE OF THE GOSPEL

Compared to The Gospel of Matthew, there are few quotations from the Old Testament or appeals to prophecy in Luke. This would indicate an audience that would not be familiar with, or interested in Jewish scripture. Also, Luke alone uses the classical Greek word for 'master' referring to Jesus (5:5; 8:24,45; 9:33,49; 17:13), whereas Matthew uses 'Lord' and Mark 'rabbi' or 'teacher'. These considerations would point to a gentile audience. And the avoidance of the Greek word 'metamorphosis' used by both Matthew and Mark at the Transfiguration, suggest an audience which might associate the word with the metamorphosis stories of Greek gods (compare Lk:9:29 with Mk9:2 and Mt17:2).

The whole structure of Luke's Gospel also shows the influence of Hellenistic (Greek) culture. For Mark and Matthew the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem is not a major feature, whereas in Luke this journey become the framework for the whole middle section of his Gospel (9:51 to 19:28) and as far as 18:14 he inserts material which is almost wholly independent of Mark's Gospel. The journeying of a healer/preacher is a common feature of

Hellenistic literature and so the structure of the Gospel places it clearly in a gentile literary tradition.

The most obvious indication of audience, of course, is the dedication of Luke's Gospel (and its companion volume, Acts) to Theophilus. The identity of this person (the name means 'beloved of God') is unknown, but the description 'most excellent' has been taken as possibly indicating a Roman of high rank. It has also been noted that Luke presents his material in the most favourable light from the point of view of the Roman authorities: three times, Pilate finds no fault with Jesus (23:4, 14, 22). The first two occasions have no parallel in the other synoptics, whilst the third is more emphatic in Luke (cf Mt 27:23 and Mk 15:14); and in making the decision to crucify rest with the Jews Luke diverts blame from the Roman authorities.

SOURCES AND AUTHORSHIP

The extent to which Luke's Gospel has drawn on Mark is clearly indicated by resources such as *A DIAGRAM OF SYNOPTIC RELATIONSHIPS* (Allan Barr, 2nd Edition, T&T Clark 1995). There is also a considerable amount of material that is common to Matthew which indicates that either one writer used the other, or they both had a common source, referred to by scholars as Q (Q = 'quelle', the German word for 'source'). Luke also claims in his introduction (1:3) to have done some investigation of his own, and there is a significant amount of material that is found only in his Gospel. It is clear from the opening of the Gospel that its author does not claim to be an eye witness.

The use of Mark (usually thought to have been written between 66 and 70AD) fits the later dating suggested for Luke; and also Luke and Mark are placed in the same 'network' of Christians by Philemon 24 and Colossians 4:10 and 14. Although The Gospel of Luke is actually anonymous, it (together with Acts) has been attributed to Luke, the doctor and friend of Paul, from the 2nd century and there has never been any serious contention over this – largely because there would be no reason to fabricate an attribution to such a comparatively unimportant person.

It has been inferred from Colossians 4:11 (which names Justus as the only Jew in a group which also contains Luke) that Luke was a gentile, and this might contribute to his interest in addressing a gentile audience. Statements by Eusebius (c260 – c340) and St Jerome (c345 – 420) indicate that the Gospel of Luke was written in Syrian Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire. Significant references in Acts to the church in Antioch have been seen as backing this claim; and the Codex Bezae has a variant reading of Acts 11:28 that implies Luke was a member of the Antioch Community. It is certainly clear from the writing that Luke was an educated man with a

good literary style that could be elegant, idiomatic, or even give echoes of the style of the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) as occasion demanded.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

One way of identifying the special features of Luke is to look at some passages that are unique to the Gospel, and see if any common themes emerge from them. For example the following unique passages: 1:35, 1:67, 2:10, 4:14, 4:17-19, 4:25-28, 7:36-39, 18:9-14 and 24:46-47 could be arranged under the headings 'International Mission', 'Rescue Mission', and 'Spirit of Mission'.

These three 'themes' of the Gospel can be related to the shaping factors of date, audience and authorship outlined above. The date of composition places the Gospel in a period when, with the Jerusalem Temple destroyed, eyes were turned to the gentile world of the Roman Empire. This together with the gentile origins of the author and his audience could be seen as contributing to the 'international' flavour of Luke's Gospel. A gentile audience might also have been more receptive to a social message than to anything more esoteric, as it would be something they could understand without a background in Judaism. A rich and prosperous empire could also be regarded as needing a reminder of its obligations to the poor (cf 'The Rich Man and Lazarus' 16:19-31). The Acts of the Apostles is often characterised as 'the Acts of the Holy Spirit', and at the date of Luke's writing, the Christian community would have been very aware of the importance of the Spirit to the mission in which they were engaged as they built on the work of the first apostles.

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

The following activities explore stories that are either only found in Luke, or have a special emphasis when Luke tells them. Lectionary references have been provided, and the activities could either be done as the reading come up in the lectionary, or as distinct blocks spread out over the year.

I. 'INTERNATIONAL MISSION'

“Good news for all people” (2:10)

'THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP': INCLUSIVITY

(Luke 15: 4-10, Proper 19, Sunday between 11 & 17 September)

This parable is also found in Matthew (18:12-14), but Luke is rather more positive about the search for the sheep 'beyond the sheep-fold': whilst The Gospel of Matthew has 'if he finds it' (vs13), Luke has 'when he has found it' (vs5). Luke's version is also more detailed.

- **Play the 'inside/outside' game. The children make a circle, linking hands, or arms. One child stays outside the circle. The 'outside' child then tries to wriggle their way into the centre of the circle whilst the others squeeze together to keep the 'intruder' out. If the circle has not been penetrated after a limited amount of time, stop the game and instruct the circle to open and welcome the outsider enthusiastically. Swap, and give several children a chance of being the 'outsider'.
(NB as this is a contact game it needs careful supervision. It should be made clear that no punching or kicking is allowed to keep the 'intruder' out – only body pressure. A good space is also needed as the circle will move!)**

After a few rounds, end the game and let the ones who were 'outsiders' explain how it felt. For those who managed to get into the ring, ask them how that felt. Ask children to think and talk about how it felt to be one of the ring, keeping someone else out.. Make a sound collage, using home made instruments, or any items that will make suitable noises, expressing the feelings of the outsider; then make a contrasting piece that reflects the feelings of the outsider who is welcomed in.

Write a version of the parable of the Lost Sheep which can be read to the accompaniment of the two sound collages. Some of the older children could do the writing.

- **Ask the children to talk about what makes them feel safe. You could make a joint ‘Feeling Safe’ poster with everyone sticking an illustration onto a single sheet. If there is mention of walls and fences, refer back to the safety of being inside the wall or fencing of the sheep pen in the parable. Suggest that Jesus would like to have the whole world in his sheep pen – get a world map from an atlas and make a model wall round it. Point out that for the world, a wall doesn’t really work as an image because the world isn’t flat. Ask the children to come up with other pictures for keeping the ball of the world safe. If no one comes up with it, suggest holding a ball in cupped hands, like a good catch in a ‘safe pair of hands’. The children could draw round their hands onto a flat sheet of clay, cut out the clay hands and mould them round a ball.**

‘THE REJECTED PROPHET’:

DON’T KEEP A GOOD THING TO YOURSELF

(Luke 4: 16-30, Last Sunday after Trinity, if observed as Bible Sunday)

Both The Gospel of Matthew (13:54-58) and of Mark (6:1-6) record the rejection of Jesus in the Nazareth Synagogue, but in both of these versions the people ‘take offence’ because Jesus is the carpenter’s son. In Luke, however, it is only after Jesus starts talking about God’s preferential treatment of gentiles (vs 25-27) that the people are ‘filled with rage’ (vs 28).

- **Take a light from a candle with a taper and light another candle with it. Ask the children if the first candle has become less bright in giving its light to another candle. If you can darken you room, you could start with a single candle, and use a taper to share its light amongst a number of night lights, then note how a great deal of illumination has been spread from that initial light, and it still hasn’t got any dimmer itself.
(NB There are obvious safety implications when using lit candles with children. Only do what you feel confident can be achieved safely given your group, space, and number of supervising adults.)**

Get everyone to teach something to someone else in the group – a game, a skill, or just a favourite story or joke. Again, ask the children to reflect on whether the ‘teacher’ has lost anything by sharing their ‘skill’ with another. Ask them to think of examples of things that can be shared without being diminished, and things that are diminished by being shared (eg a conjuror’s trick no longer works if everyone knows how to do it).

Explain that people were cross with Jesus because he wanted to share around the things that he knew about God. Ask them to reflect on why that might have made people angry.

- **Make up a simple game, or find one the children are unlikely to know how to play. Give the children the instructions but in code and leave them to it. Have a couple of leaders go into a corner of the room with instructions in plain English and play the game easily – making a big show of enjoying themselves. After a few minutes, give the children the key to the code, and let them decipher the instructions, then play the game.**

Get the children to discuss their feelings on not being able to understand the instructions, and on seeing the leaders having fun playing the game. Ask them for any examples from their experience when people have been unhelpful and not given others the knowledge or clues they need to do something. Ask them to consider why people are sometimes unhelpful in this way. Refer back to the story of the rejection in the synagogue – Jesus wanted to give the world clues on how God wants them to ‘play the game of life’, why did the people of Nazareth get so cross?

‘SIMEON’S PROPHECY’: OUR MULTI-CULTURAL FAITH

(Luke2: 25-32, 4th Sunday of Epiphany & Candlemas)

‘ ... a light for revelation to the Gentiles ... ’ (25:32)

- **Use one or more of the following packs (all available from our Resources Centre):**
***THE CHRIST WE SHARE*, ed Anne McConnell, USPG/CMS/ TheMethodist Church 1999**
***PICTURING JESUS*, Lat Blaylock, CEP 2001, ISBN 1 85100 142 5**
***BORN AMONG US*, ED Kate Wyles, USPG & The Methodist Church.**

Each pack contains a number of pictures showing illustrations from our faith but in the styles and settings of different cultures from the world Church. Get a large map of the world and ask the children to find the country of origin of some of the pictures and place them over the countries they represent. Ask the children what they know about these countries – perhaps they could find some things out for next time. Research the current statistics on numbers of Christians in different parts of the world. Make sure that the children realise that Europe is only a small part of the world Church – and reflect with

them on how far that 'light to lighten the gentiles' has shone from its first appearing at Bethlehem.

- The pictures from the packs show Jesus and other characters from the Gospel stories as if they were just like the people who made the pictures, and not like people from 1st century Judea. Get the children to discuss why the artists have done this – and any issues this raises.

Ask the children to take an incident from the Jesus story and illustrate it as if it was happening today in their own neighbourhood. Either before, during or after doing the picture, talk with them about what features are included in their pictures and why.

'THE FAMILY TREE OF JESUS': THE FAMILY OF HUMANITY

(Luke 3: 23-38 – not in the lectionary, but could be used over the Christmas period)

In Luke the tree goes back to Adam, in Matthew (1:1-17) it only goes back to Abraham and in fact *starts* with Abraham rather than working back from Jesus as Luke does: the difference between seeing Jesus as part of the Jewish race and seeing him as part of the human race.

- Explore family trees – how far back can the children trace their families, and how wide can they spread their family connections? If family histories are likely to prove a problem in your group, then you could explore one of the leaders' trees as an example of the way families stretch back in time. Make a long string with all the names in Jesus's family tree hanging on it – the children could have fun reading them out as quickly as possible (each child taking a batch in turn). Give every child a string on which they hang their own name. They then tie it onto Jesus's string at the Adam end. Discuss with the children the implications of tracing Jesus's descent back to Adam, and tying our own strings in to that.
- Watch an episode of 'The Simpsons' or a similar popular series which gives an example of a family sticking together. Talk about their own experiences of families – how they are and how they would like them to be. Discuss the implications of being part of the human family – how we are, and how the children would like us to be as a world community. Remind the children that Jesus came to be a part of the whole human family – Luke traces his family line back to the first humans, before there were different nations. Recap all the best examples of family behaviour that the children have come up with – Jesus wants to be like this towards all people everywhere.

'THE GOOD SAMARITAN': BEING POSITIVE ABOUT THE WORLD

(Luke 10: 30-37, Proper 10, Sunday between 10th and 16th July)

For the children to make the connection between the parable and the activities, they will need to be told that for Jews the Samaritans were the most despised of 'foreigners'. For Jesus to be positive about them of all people was therefore a very dramatic example of how he wanted us to treat each other across racial and national boundaries. Other unique examples of 'positive' responses to Samaritans are found in Luke 17:11-19, the grateful Samaritan leper (Proper 23, Sunday between 9th and 15th October); and Luke 9:51-56, where Jesus does not permit retribution against unwelcoming Samaritans (Proper 8, Sunday between 26th June and 2nd July).

- Borrow a selection of books on different countries from the library, or a local school. Get the children to look through them and find something that they find attractive about each country, its people or customs. Make a display, illustrating all these positives in pictures and words. If children in the group or adults in the congregation have been on foreign holidays or visits, or have experience of living or working abroad, they could be asked to give a short talk about the good things they experienced.
- Enlist the help of some football fanatics and collect materials – magazines, programmes, information from the last World Cup etc – that will enable the children to go through the Premiership teams and identify the different countries all the players come from. Ask the children to collect pictures of the players from magazines and newspapers to stick around a world map, linking the players to their countries of origin with threads. Colour their national flags and stick them next to the players. Get the children to pick a top 'World Dream Team'. Discuss the advantages of bringing in players from a number of countries – why do teams do this? Note that Jesus wants people from all countries on his 'team'.

2. 'RESCUE MISSION'

"To release the oppressed" (4:18)

The fact that Luke 'imports' the reference to 'the oppressed' from an earlier chapter of Isaiah (58:6) and adds it to the main quotation (Isaiah 61:1,2) that Jesus reads in the Nazareth synagogue is an indication of the importance Luke felt Jesus had placed on this concern.

Jesus's care for the oppressed and marginalized, as recorded in Luke, could be reflected in a general way by special projects on Christian organisations

working with those on the margins or engaged in relief work: eg prison reform, rehabilitation, homelessness, Jubilee 2000, Traidcraft, Christian Aid. Speakers could be invited from such organisations throughout the year. 'Homelessness Sunday', 25th January 2004, could be marked (see the Housing Justice website for help: www.housingjustice.org.uk); or any other Sunday during the year which is designated to a suitable cause. You could do a case study of a particular issue for Christians today, such as the role of women in the Church.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN

The prominent role given to women is a notable feature of Luke's Gospel, for example:

Mary and Elizabeth (Luke 1: 5-66, Advent 4)
Anna (Luke 2:36-38, Epiphany 4, Candlemas)
Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42, Proper 11, Sunday between 17th and 23rd July)

The Widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15, Proper 5, Sunday between 5th and 11th June)
The Ministering Women (Luke 8:1-3, Proper 6, Sunday between 12th and 18th June)
The Daughters of Jerusalem (Luke 23:27,28, Palm Sunday – Liturgy of the Passion)

- Research and produce a 'docu-drama' on the life of a great female 'hero of the faith', or comprising snippets from the lives of a number through history. Some inspiration can be found in *BELOVED AND CHOSEN – WOMEN OF FAITH* by Jill Evans, Canterbury Press 1993, ISBN 1-85311-060-4 (available for loan from Church House).
- Invite women from the congregation or the local community who have 'high profile/status' jobs to visit the group and talk about their work: eg doctors, policewomen, solicitors, MPs, vicars! Note how many jobs women were not allowed to do 100 years ago and discuss whether this was either fair or wise.

A WELCOME TO THE OUTCASTS

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is seen as reaching out to those who have been rejected by others, for example:

Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10, 4th before Advent)
Parable of the repentant Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14, Proper 25, Sunday between 23rd and 29th October)
The Sinful Woman (Luke 7:36-50, Proper 6, Sunday between 12th and 18th June)

**The 2nd Thief on the Cross
& Christ the King)**

(Luke 23:40-43, Palm Sunday, Liturgy of the Passion

- **Play a ‘knock out’ game such as ‘Statues’. At the end, discuss how the ‘knocked out’ children felt – and also how they behaved whilst they waited for the game to end. Now play a game which includes everyone right to the end. Discuss whether that had a different ‘feel’ about it. If we reject people who have done wrong in some way, or not measured up to our standards – if we ‘knock them out’ of the game of life – then they will feel bad and perhaps be more likely to ‘misbehave’ again. Use one of the stories from Luke to show that Jesus didn’t reject people who had fallen short.**
- **Have a session on ‘saying sorry’. Encourage the children to share experiences of doing something wrong then saying ‘sorry’. Were they forgiven? How did they know? How did it feel to be forgiven? How does it feel not to be forgiven? Perhaps the leaders could get the ball rolling and establish the openness required for this kind of discussion by sharing some experiences of their own. Use one of Luke’s stories to show how Jesus forgave.**
- **Have two leaders represent characters X and Y. They tell children (by way of mime, acting, narration, or simple explanation) that a week ago X stole something from Y, but later gave the thing back and said ‘sorry’. Some food has been set out and X explains it’s their party, giving out invitations to all the group. Another leader now explains to the group that all their parents have refused to let them go to X’s party because X stole from Y. All the children apologise to X and say they can’t come. X sits alone with the food (but doesn’t eat!) whilst the children gather with the other leaders and discuss how X must be feeling. Then Y goes to X and says that they have begged their parents to let them come to the party to show X is forgiven. Y sits with X. The other leader announces that because Y has gone to Xs party, all the parents have now let their children go. Everyone joins X and eats. Afterwards, tell the story of Zacchaeus – the man who took money from people then gave it back – and note the way Jesus came to eat with him.**

GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR

Whilst the version of the Beatitudes in The Gospel of Matthew refers to ‘the poor in spirit’ (5:3) Luke speaks simply of ‘the poor’ (6:20). The parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31, Proper 21, Sunday between 25th September

and 1st October) makes clear how important it is to Jesus to bring ‘good news to the poor’ (4:18); and the parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21, Proper 13, Sunday between 31st July and 6th August) shows Jesus’s attitude towards those who hoard earthly wealth for themselves. The Gospel of Matthew describes mysterious ‘wise men’ bringing rich gifts to the baby Jesus, but in Luke it is ordinary shepherds who are chosen to visit the manger, to proclaim the wonders they have seen, and to receive the angelic message which is ‘for all the people’ (2:10).

- **Hold up a banana, and ask the children where they think it comes from. Give them examples of places of origin of bananas: eg tropical America, the Canaries, West Africa. Look at these places on a map and ask the children to list all the different groups of people they think might be involved in getting the banana in your hand from the place it grew to the shop you bought it from. Get one child to represent each of these groups of people: grower, packer, shipper, importer, wholesaler, shop owner and stand them in a line, starting with the grower and ending with the shop owner. Give the shop owner 40p in pennies for the banana, then tell the shop owner they have to pay 26p to the wholesaler, who has to pay 20p to the importer, who has to pay 16p to the shipper, who has to pay 10p to the packer, who pays 4p to the grower. Finally, look at how much each person along the way has got out of the price of the banana. Point out that the person at the end of the trail, the grower, gets very little, and that many growers stay poor because of this. Remind the children that Jesus wanted to bring ‘good news to the poor’ so many Christians try to find ways of getting more of the money for products like bananas to the growers. Discuss how this might be achieved. Look at some material from ‘Fairtrade’ campaigns.**

(NB although the basic principle will remain the same, the figures will change over time. Try to obtain up to date information from one of the organisations that work in this field eg Oxfam, or Christian Aid)

- **Give the children a copy of the central section of story of the Rich Fool – chapter 12, verses 16-19 – and ask them to count the number of times the rich man uses the words ‘I’ and ‘my’ in what he says to himself. Then point out that the one time he uses the word ‘you’ he’s actually referring to his own soul. Get the children to look at verses 16 and 17 and imagine that instead of talking to himself, the rich man had asked *them* the question, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ What advice would they give him? Can the children think of modern situations where rich people have more than they know what to do with? What advice would the children give to these people? Look at verse 21. Ask the children what they think it means to**

be 'rich towards God.' You could look at some different translations of this verse to see how the different translators interpret it.

3. 'SPIRIT OF MISSION'

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me" (4:18)

To take the Good News into all the world, and to work for the agenda of freedom set out in Luke 4:18 is not something that can be undertaken in human strength alone, and Luke's Gospel reminds us of the special strength that God provides for the tasks he gives: the power of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is frequently emphasised in the Gospel eg:

The Holy Spirit fills John	(Luke 1:15, Advent 2 – 2 nd service)
The Holy Spirit fills Elizabeth	(Luke 1:41, Advent 4)
The Annunciation	(Luke 1:35, Feast of the Annunciation, 25 th March)
Zechariah's Prophecy	(Luke 1:67, Christmas Eve)
The Return to Galilee	(Luke 4:14,15, Epiphany 3)
The Nazareth Synagogue	(Luke 4:18, Epiphany 3 & Bible Sunday)
The Father's Gift of the Holy Spirit	(Luke 11:13, Proper 12, Sunday between 24 th and 30 th July)

LED BY THE SPIRIT

(Luke 4:1-13, Lent 1)

The temptations in the wilderness are recorded in all the three synoptic Gospels, but a comparison of Matthew 4:1 and Mark 1:12,13 with Luke 4:1 shows the added emphasis that Luke gives – the leading which the Holy Spirit gave Jesus involved 'filling him', and it is 'filled with the power of the Spirit' that he returns to begin his ministry (4:14).

- To prepare for any sport you need to train and keep fit. Ask individual children to demonstrate 'keep fit' activities they have done at school or as part of any sports they are involved in. Select any activities that could safely be done by the group in your room and have the group do them until they are tired. Talk about hard, strenuous things – why we do them and what keeps us going. Ask the children to tell the group about any trainers, teachers, mentors they've had who have been good at motivating them. Tell the children how Jesus had to 'train' for his ministry during his time in the wilderness, and how the Holy Spirit was his mentor.
- Ask the children to choose a partner they would trust to lead them safely when they are blindfolded. Set up a simple obstacle course and have the children negotiate it in their pairs – one blindfolded, the

other leading. When everyone who wants to has had a go, ask the children why they chose the partners they did. Discuss the fact that Jesus entrusted himself to the leading of the Holy Spirit in the wilderness and throughout the dangerous years that followed – he too must have trusted his guide/leader.

NB – there are clearly safety implications with this game. Do your own safety assessment before you start and include the following precautions: remove, or make safe anything else in the room apart from the obstacles; make sure the obstacles themselves will not cause injury; have non-participating children out of the way of the action, at the side of the room, and quiet enough for adult instructions to be heard; ensure close adult supervision and be ready to intervene quickly if a child is being ‘led astray’!

INSPIRED BY THE SPIRIT

(Luke 4:14,15, Epiphany 3; Luke 4:18, Epiphany 3 & Bible Sunday)

- Ask adults from the congregation or local community to tell the children about what or who inspired them to do some of the things they have done in their lives. Read Luke 4:16-21 and discuss Jesus’s inspiration – clearly, he knew scripture and the *words* of Isaiah themselves (61:1 & 2 plus 58:6) must have been an inspiration, but so was the actual Spirit the scripture describes, since Jesus ends by saying the words of Isaiah – which include, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me” – have ‘come true’ then and there. You could point out that the word ‘inspire’ literally means ‘to breathe into’, and that breath is a symbol sometimes used to refer to the Holy Spirit.
- Have the children talk about things they would like to do, places they would like to go, things they would like to have in their lives. Individuals could give a short presentation on one of their ambitions for the future. Get them to think about the difficulties they might face in achieving their goals. Ask them what lengths they would be prepared to go to, to achieve their aims. Talk about what sacrifices Jesus made in carrying out the aims he described in the Nazareth ‘manifesto’ (4:18,19).

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

(Luke 11:13, Proper 12, Sunday between 24th and 30th July)

In the parallel passage in the Gospel of Matthew (7:11), the writer speaks of the ‘good things’ our heavenly Father will give to those who ask. Luke is

more specific – he tells us that the good thing we will be given is ‘the Holy Spirit’ (11:13).

- Prepare a large cartoon picture of a demanding child with ‘I want!’ above their head. Also prepare a pile of cards, each with a typical child’s ‘demand’ written on it. Ask the children to imagine they are parents and that they have to sort the cards into a ‘yes’ pile and a ‘no’ pile. When they have finished, ask them to discuss the criteria they used in deciding which demands to accept and which to reject: good/bad for you; dangerous/safe; too expensive/affordable etc. Luke tells us the Father will *never* reject a request for the Holy Spirit – if it’s always going to go on the ‘yes’ pile, what does this tell us about the Holy Spirit, in the light of the previous discussion?
- Collect verbal and visual images of the Holy Spirit which have been used in scripture and the Christian tradition. Ask the children why they think those images have been chosen, and if they can think of any other images they might use themselves to help them understand a bit more about the Holy Spirit. They can then do some art work of their own, either using traditional images or those they have come up with themselves. They could also compose poems or sound collages to reflect the Holy Spirit. Use the visual work as a meditative focus: gather round the work in a circle and listen to the Taizé chant ‘Veni, Sancte Spiritus’. Well known phrases from the liturgy could be read over the music eg: ‘cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit’ (Common Worship p168); ‘We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life’ (Common Worship p173); ‘in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body’ (Common Worship p290); ‘The Lord is here. His Spirit is with us.’ (Common Worship p176 & elsewhere); ‘renew us by your Spirit’ (Common Worship p187); ‘Send the Holy Spirit on your people’ (Common Worship p190); ‘Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory’ (Common Worship p182).

TAUGHT BY THE SPIRIT

(Luke 1:67, Christmas Eve)

In addition to Zechariah’s prophecy, which gives an example of someone speaking at the direct prompting of the Holy Spirit, the children could be reminded of the promise given in Luke 12:12 (Proper 22, Sunday between 2nd and 8th October, 3rd service), (and also found less explicitly in Matthew 10:19,20), that the Holy Spirit will teach us what to say in times of need.

- **Set up an improvisation scenario: give the children the outline of a scene – the characters in it, and roughly what will happen (eg a beginning, middle and end) – and get them to act it out, leaving dialogue and details of the action to them except for two or three ‘key lines’ which they *must* include somewhere in the improvisation. After the improvisation, talk about the way that sometimes the Holy Spirit guides us by giving general direction (like the scene outline) but at others we are given very specific direction (like the ‘key lines’).**
- **Set up a treasure hunt round your room, building, or church. When the children have completed the hunt and found their prize, talk about the way that they set off ‘in faith’, trusting that their leaders had given them the right clues and that there would be something good at the end. Discuss how this might relate to the life of faith – we trust in the guidance, the ‘clues’, the Holy Spirit gives, and that the journey on which we are being led has a purpose and worthwhile end. Ask members of the congregation to give examples of the ‘teaching’ of the Holy Spirit in their lives – has anyone had experience of a very specific leading in word or action?**

**Revd Steve Dixon
Children’s Officer
Manchester Diocesan
Board of Education
5th Floor, Church House
90 Deansgate,
Manchester
M3 2GH**

0161 828 1433

stephendixon@manchester.anglican.org

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