

# ***“THE BIG ISSUES”***

**(USING CURRENT ISSUES WITH CHILDREN)**

**A resource pack compiled from the contributions of children’s work leaders in the Diocese of Manchester**

July 2003

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# INTRODUCTION

The 2003 summer training programme for Children's Work Leaders was planned under the cloud of preparations for the Iraq war. The situation reminded us that our children are concerned about many of the 'big issues' in the world around them, and the decision was made that the summer programme would look at ways of addressing some of these issues in our work with children in the church.

Ninety eight people, representing thirty three parishes from thirteen deaneries across the Diocese attended the nine sessions that were held. As part of each evening, participants were asked to share some of the 'big issues' that children had talked to them about in recent weeks. The following are some of the topics they reported had been raised – a 'snap-shot' of children's concerns in summer 2003:

Animals – cruelty & exploitation \*  
Asylum seekers  
Boyfriends/ girlfriends  
Bullying  
Choices \*  
Consumerism \*  
Crime \*  
David Beckham – how he's been treated  
Death \*  
Divorce/ parents separating  
Drugs \*  
Environment \*  
Exams – worries and pressures  
Fairness \*  
Fair trade  
Family conflict  
Fighting  
Forgiveness \*  
Friendship/ relationships \*  
Greed  
Harry Potter – the hype  
Harry Potter – the struggle between good and evil \*  
Health \*  
Homelessness  
Late nights  
Loving your enemies \*  
Loving your neighbours \*  
Marriage  
Money  
Natural disasters  
Other faiths \*  
Peer pressure \*  
Poverty \*  
Punishment  
Racism  
Religious intolerance \*

Respect \*  
Rules \*  
Self-image \*  
Suffering \*  
Sunday observance – playing sport \*  
Terrorism  
'The Supernatural'  
Third World – debt/ food/ justice issues \*  
TV  
War \*  
War games

Later in the evening, participants were asked to choose an issue and plan a session to explore it with children from a Christian perspective. The asterisked topics above are those that were touched on in the material that was produced and it is interesting to reflect on the issues that were chosen and those that were not, as well as on the way that groups tackled the issues they chose.

Some participants said that they would have liked the opportunity to share each other's work at the end of the evening. Unfortunately, time constraints prevented this, but in reading through this pack – the combined result of all the work in the nine sessions – you will be able to share the insights of the twenty seven groups who took part, rather than just the two or three who were present on any one particular evening.

One of the values of meeting together with leaders from other parishes is to experience different perspectives and ways of working, and hopefully as you read through the pack you will find a variety of approaches, different ways of setting out aims for a session, and different ways of structuring the time spent with the children.

The session plans are presented virtually as the participants recorded them and, of course, represent their own views and approaches. If you decide to use any of the material with your children, please remember to make an assessment of any Child Protection issues. I take responsibility for the organisation of the material into the three sections – World, Society, and Personal – and recognise that some sessions could easily fit into more than one of these areas.

Two of the final sections of this pack are also mine – the 'planning process' that I used in the training, and a check list of elements which might make up the structure of a session. However, the last section is again the work of the participants – a list of nearly two hundred activities to do with children, taken from their jottings. Now we need never be stuck for an activity again!

Many thanks to all who took part in 'The Big Issues', and I hope you find the pack you have contributed to both enjoyable and useful in your work with children.

**Steve Dixon**

Manchester Diocesan Children's Officer

July 2003

# WORLD ISSUES

## ANIMALS

**AGE RANGE:** 3 - 5 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 45 mins

**AIM:** To understand that all animals are part of God's wonderful world

### **SESSION OUTLINE:**

#### **Introduction** (5 mins)

- Lord's Prayer and take collection

#### **Opening Activity** (10 mins)

- Leaders hold up various pictures of animals and let the children name them.
- Pre record/buy tape of various animal noises, again letting the children guess which animal they can hear.

#### **Story** (10 mins)

- Tell the children the story of Noah's Ark and how all the animals went in two by two

#### **Creative Activity** (15 mins)

- Get all the children to colour in masks of different animals, then ask them to pair up with each other to reflect the animals going in the Ark two by two.
- Sing: 'Good old Noah had an Ark, ee-i-ee-i-o, and in the Ark he had some ...' to the tune of 'Old McDonald', letting the children hold up the masks to fit in with the song.

#### **Closing Prayer** (5 mins)

- Get the leader to explain that the final prayer is to give thanks for all God's animals and that the children should join in with the 'Thank you, God'.

*Dear Father God,  
We like the animals you have made  
**Thank you, God.**  
We like the giraffes  
**Thank you, God.***

(etc till all the animals discussed in the session have been included)

**Contributors:**

Chris Bainbridge – St Paul, Astley Bridge  
Della Farrington &  
Jenny Murphy – Christ Church, Walmsley

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## **DIFFERENT BELIEFS**

**AGE RANGE:** 7 - 11 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 45 mins

**AIM:** To be aware of things that mark us out as Christians; to learn about some other faiths and how they can be recognised; to know what kinds of things we have in common; to know what makes our faith special to us; to know that God loves and created everybody.

### **SESSION OUTLINE:**

#### **Welcoming**

#### **Song**

- 'He's Got the Whole World'

#### **Games** (15 mins)

- 'Knives, Forks & Spoons': leader repeatedly calls out 'knives,' 'forks,' or 'spoons' in random order. For 'knives' children stand with arms by their sides, for 'forks' with arms in the air, for 'spoons' they couch down. Children are out if they do the wrong action. If they are too good at it, make it so that the last one to do the action is out.
- Story Relay

#### **Discussion**

- What marks us out as Christians?
- What symbols do you recognise in other faiths?
- What things do we have in common?

## Activity

- Cut and paste worksheet that draws out the things we have in common:

|           | Worship | Holy Book | Symbol |
|-----------|---------|-----------|--------|
| Christian |         |           |        |
| Jewish    |         |           |        |
| Muslim    |         |           |        |

## Bible Story

- Read Bible passages to explain why our faith is special, that Jesus is our friend and wants to be friends with everyone. He wants us to share this with others.

## Closing Worship

- Prayer: *Lord Jesus,  
We thank you for making each one of us. We know that we are special to you. Help us to be friends with everyone, and to care for everyone in need.  
Amen*
- Song: 'When I needed a neighbour.'

### Contributors:

Gwynneth Derere,

Dorothy Needham &

Carol Smith

- St Thomas & St John with St Philip, Radcliffe

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## ENVIRONMENT

**AGE RANGE:** 6 - 8 years

**SESSION LENGTH:**

30 mins

**AIM:** How can I look after God's world?

### SESSION OUTLINE:

**Bible reading** – Genesis 1: 1-5, 21, 24, 31

## **Illustration**

- Link the children sitting around a clean, tidy, empty floor to God's perfect world.
- Show pictures of idyllic countryside to take them outside into the world.
- Empty a prepared black bin sack of rubbish over the floor eg cardboard boxes; toilet rolls; foil; plastic bottles; string; pretend foods; newspapers
  - This is what we throw away and spoils God's perfect world.

## **Discussion**

- What would happen if we just left the rubbish?

## **Activity**

- Sort the rubbish into piles. Link with the idea of recycling. Is it really rubbish? What can we use again?

## **Story**

- Children living in shanty towns. A universal issue. Rubbish can be used constructively.

## **Craft**

- What can we make out of these piles of rubbish?

## **Prayer**

- 'Prayers for a Fragile World' by Carol Watson, Lion – p36-37

## **Contributors:**

Robert Airey &

Ken Hall

Catherine King

- Emmanuel, Holcombe

- St Andrew, Ramsbottom

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# **POVERTY**

**AGE RANGE:** 7 - 10 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 40 mins  
+ worship

**AIM:** To give an understanding of poverty – how fortunate we are in this country.  
How can we help others?

## **SESSION OUTLINE:**

### **Opening Activity** (10 mins)

- Match/word associate  
eg dinner plate = food  
water = bath/drink  
home = house  
What we take for granted – flip chart

### **Teaching** (20 mins)

- What do you think 'poverty' means? Homelessness, begging, not enough food.
- What does the Bible say? We are all children of God and therefore should love and look after each other. Share what we have without moaning. Read Isaiah 58:6-10. God provides like he did for Moses – read the story of the manna and quails (Exodus Ch 16).

### **Activity** (10 mins)

- Act out making a drink:  
~ our children: turning on a tap and drinking fresh, clean water  
~ poor child: taking a bucket to water tap or river, carrying it back quite a distance
- Look at problems of making baby milk up from powder with dirty water.
- Tasting game – different types of water.
- How can we help? Buy 'Fair Trade'; sponsor a child by collecting pennies; shoebox appeal; prayer.

### **Worship**

- Group prayers – thanking God for our lives; praying for the world; praying for children in terrible situations.
- Sing – 'When I needed a neighbour'.
- Sketch – 'Starfish: Thank you for Saving Me'.  
A girl on a beach throwing starfish back into the sea. Man on the beach asks the girl what difference she could possibly make when the beach is covered with starfish. She explains that although she can't help all of them she can make a small difference.

**Contributors:**

Linda Campbell,

Janet King &amp;

Kathy Hutchins

- St Mary, Haughton Green

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**SUFFERING****AGE RANGE:** 8 - 14 yrs**SESSION LENGTH:** 45 mins**AIM:** The children will explore the meaning of suffering and God's love being with us throughout**SESSION OUTLINE:****Welcome****Sharing our News****Outline of Session****Introductory Game**

- ~ Split the children into groups of 3 – 4.
- ~ Have cards with examples of suffering:
  - death of parent/grandparent
  - illness of a child
  - death of an animal/pet
  - bullying
  - homelessness
  - famine
  - poverty
  - divorce of parents
  - cannot have designer clothes/trainers
  - bedtime
  - pocket money
- ~ Have some blank cards for children to write some examples of their own.
- ~ Ask children to prioritise cards in levels of suffering.

**Feedback and Discussion****Bible Reading** John 9:1-7

## Prayer

- Group to join hands. Invite prayers from anyone present.
- Conclude with the 'Serenity Prayer' (Reinhold Niebuhr)

*God grant me  
the grace to accept with serenity the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

## Contributors:

Gwen Battersby,

Jean Bracken &

Alison Dalley – St Peter, Belmont

Andrew Dawson – Board for Mission & Society, Church House

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## WAR

**AGE RANGE:** 7 - 11 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 40 mins

**AIM:** To explore 'what is war?' and produce displays to show the children's understanding of war and the biblical texts associated with war

## SESSION OUTLINE:

### Welcome

### Starter – 'What is War?' (15 mins)

- Brainstorm feelings about war. Collect words and photos about war. Use newspapers, large paper, marker pens, cut out photos.
- POSTER 1- Make a display using the children's own quotes and ideas about war, facts about war, and possibly their own experiences of conflict perhaps incorporating spray paint/drawings/graffiti

### Bible Work (15 mins)

- POSTER 2 – make another display with biblical texts (even if apparently conflicting); some historical facts about causes of biblical wars; children's thoughts about God's response to war.

**Prayer** (10 mins)

- Child led.
- Possibly stations for ideas of praying.
- Possibly silent, or written themselves, using candles and/or music.

**Contributors:**

Sarah Barber &

Andrew Dyer

Jane Greenhalgh

Tom Studman

- St Clement, Chorlton-cum-Hardy

- St Margaret, Burnage

- St Clement, Chorlton-cum-Hardy

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## **WAR AND FORGIVENESS**

**AGE RANGE:** 2½ - 8 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 45-60 mins

**AIM:** To show that forgiving is a good thing to do and to demonstrate where you can see it in the Bible and in real life now.

**SESSION OUTLINE:**

**Opening Prayer** (3 mins)

**Introduce Story/Aim** (5 mins)

- Bring in experiences from the week of forgiveness personally and in the world.

**Reading** (10 mins)

- The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32): an older child reads a children's bible version; or the leader talks through their own brief outline of the story, or uses puppets.

**Craft** (20 mins)

- Children make a card for someone they have fallen out with, saying they are forgiven, or saying sorry to someone and asking for forgiveness.

**Recap & Closing Prayer** (7 mins)

- If presenting to congregation, talk about what we have done and what we will say.

**Contributors:**

Janet Banks - St Elisabeth, Reddish  
Doreen Blagg - St Peter, Levenshulme  
Helen Scanlan - St George, Dane Bank

## **ISSUES FOR SOCIETY**

### **CONSUMERISM**

(Designer Gear)

**AGE RANGE:** 7 - 11 years

**SESSION LENGTH:** 60 mins

**AIM:** To highlight Christian values via worldly values

#### **SESSION OUTLINE:**

##### **Introductory game**

- Shopping game: a selection of cut out articles, with prices, stuck on card are spread round the room. Children are asked to select two items that they would choose if money was no object.
- Show what they have chosen and say why.

##### **Discussion**

- Summarise the chosen items: how many are 'designer' goods; how many are cheaper goods.
- Reinforce why they chose the 'designer' items.

##### **Bible**

- Matthew 6:25-34; Matthew 19:16-30; Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 13:44-45
- Choose one or two readings to reinforce Christian teaching

##### **Activity**

- Divide a large sheet of card/paper into sections, each headed with a different family scenario/social status (see illustration). Children cut out items from catalogues – clothes/ furniture/ life style items – and stick them onto sections. Leaders give input during the activity to draw out contrasts.

Beckham Family		Bank Manager & Family
Career Person	What Would Jesus Choose?	Homeless Person
Single Parent + 2 children	Unemployed Person + children	Student

## Worship

- Song: 'The Wise Man Built His House Upon The Rock' (Ace Foundations) Spring Harvest 2002
- Prayer – Time of silence. Children encouraged to offer prayer. Pray for individual sectors of society – to use money wisely (including ourselves).

### Contributors:

Jean Hall - Emmanuel, Holcombe  
Penny Hanley & Jean Houghton - St Mary, Hawkshaw

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## CRIME AND FORGIVENESS

**AGE RANGE:** 8+ yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 30-45 mins

**AIM:** To understand right and wrong; to accept we are all sinners; to be able to forgive.

### SESSION OUTLINE:

#### Opening Prayer

#### Discussion

- Share personal experience of crime.
- Explore why: issues of evil/ anger/ greed/ suffering.

#### Scripture

- David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12)
- 10 Commandments: do not kill; do not steal.
- Lessons learned from mistakes made.

## Activity

- Cartoon strip drawing to express feelings (confessions)

## Close

- Lord's Prayer
- Worship

## Contributors:

|                  |                                      |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Steve Castellani | - St John the Baptist, Heaton Mersey |
| Peter Gibson     | - St Peter, Levenshulme              |
| Angela McCallum  | - St Elisabeth, Reddish              |
| Joan Williams    | - St John the Baptist, Heaton Mersey |

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## DRUGS

**AGE RANGE:** 7 - 11 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 60 mins

**AIM:** Awareness of how drugs can affect your life

### SESSION OUTLINE:

**Introduction** (10 mins)

- Look at a newspaper article about a young person who has died due to drugs.
- Answer the following questions:
  - 1) How do you think the young person's parents felt?
  - 2) How did the young person feel themselves?
  - 3) Where do you think the young person got the money for the drugs?

**Main Activity** (10 mins)

- Feedback on questions.
- How can you find help? Drug agencies (leaflets available); family; friends; God.

**Scripture** (5 mins)

- Parable of the Lost Sheep - Matthew 18:10-14 or Luke 15:3-7

**Craft** (25 mins)

- Make poster/collage to show where to find help

**Prayer** (5 mins)

- Write prayers in pairs
- Share prayers

**Ending**

- Display posters around the room

**Contributors:**

Jaqui Adams

Christine Oates &

Jane Pope

- St Barnabas, Clarksfield, Oldham

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**FAIRNESS**

**AGE RANGE:** 3 - 7 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 45 mins

**AIM:** To understand that other people need things too

**SESSION OUTLINE:**

**Introduction**

**Outside Activity**

- Provide activity toys in a box such as skipping ropes, bean bags, balls, and hoops, but not enough for each child.
- Let them play for 5 – 10 minutes.
- Discuss issues that arise – was it fair that one child had a toy and another didn't?
- Ask for volunteers to give up their toy – discuss what happens.
- Finish play session and go back inside.

**Discussion of Children's Feelings**

- Were any left out?
- Did any children invite others to play with them?

## Story

- Tell Aesop's Fable – The Fox and the Stork.  
Although the animals pretended to be sharing they really weren't and the fox learns the lesson of considering the needs of others.
- Discuss the moral of the story relating to earlier play

## Closing Prayer

*Dear God,  
Help us to think of others before ourselves and to share more.  
Amen.*

## Contributors:

Jackie Cairns,  
Lesley Cooper,  
Janice Nuttall &  
Elsie Povey - St Paul, Astley Bridge

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# HARRY POTTER

**AGE RANGE:** 8 - 10 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 60 mins

**AIM:** To explore Good and Evil

## SESSION OUTLINE:

### Opening Prayer

### Song

- 'God is Good' – Graham Kendrick

### Introduction

- We have just sung good is God – but what is 'good'? How do we know what good is?

### Activity

- Children are given cards with names of people, ways of behaving, objects etc: eg GUNS, NAME CALLING, ANGER, DAVID BECKHAM, HARRY POTTER, LORD VOLDEMORT, CHOCOLATE, PROFESSOR SNAPE. They divide the cards up under the following headings: GOOD, BAD, NOT SURE

## Feedback

- Some may think guns are good; some will be unsure about Professor Snape. Discuss 'How do we know what is good and bad?'
- Get answers – show how our understanding of good and evil comes from:
  1. Ourselves – conscience
  2. Upbringing – parents, teachers etc  
Do people have the same understanding of Good v Bad in other cultures?
  3. For Christians – the BIBLE

## Bible

- Look at Revelation 12:7-12 – possibly act it out. It gives us a picture of how the world is now. Satan's time is limited and Christ will have the victory. Revelation 20:10

## (Another activity

- Ask children to describe evil and/or the devil.
- Get images of Satan and look at these.)

## End Point

- Good always triumphs.  
In Harry Potter – the love of his parents saves him.  
For us – the love of Jesus saves/protects us.

**Prayer** – around the above.

## Contributors:

Matt Calladine &

Jane Grayson

- St Mary, Moston

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# **KEEP SUNDAY SPECIAL**

**AGE RANGE:** 10 - 12 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 30-45 mins

**AIM:** To identify conflict to Sunday worship/activities.

## **SESSION OUTLINE:**

### **Introduction**

- Look at material promoting Sunday activities: adverts, local press, Sunday trading times

### **Story**

- Eric Liddel (Olympic runner who refused to compete on Sunday): show clip from 'Chariots of Fire' outlining his dilemma, or tell the story.

### **Discussion**

- What do you think of Liddel's actions?
- What you have done in Liddel's place, and why?
- Can we 'mix' our Sunday?
- Should we have worship on a different day from Sunday?

### **End**

- Show clip from 'Chariots of Fire' of Liddel winning the race he *did* agree to enter.

### **Bible readings**

- Genesis 2:2 – Creation
- Luke 6:1-10 – Lord of the Sabbath

### **Prayer**

- Reflecting: the 'business' of the session; quietness; special time/relations with God; thank you, God, for time to be with you.

*Lord Jesus,  
You lived in a world of conflict: help us when we make decisions, to follow  
your way and do the right thing.  
Amen.*

### **Contributors:**

Gloria Appleby - St Andrew, Ramsbottom  
Sue Ellis - St Nicholas, Newchurch  
Louise Williams - St Andrew, Hillock

## **'LOVE YOUR ENEMIES'**

**AGE RANGE:** 7 - 10 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 30-40 mins

**AIM:** To show that it is easy to hate someone or knock them down verbally and physically but being nice is better

### **SESSION OUTLINE:**

#### **Introduction** (5 mins)

- Tell children the overall aim
- Tell them that we will be doing an activity to demonstrate the message, and then will discuss what we do in our lives that relates to the activity.

#### **Activity** (15 mins)

- Split the group by eye colour – blue eyes/ brown eyes
- Give an arm band to one group eg brown eyed children
- Treat one group as superior by telling children rules such as:
  - ~ blue eyed children on chairs/ brown eyed children on floor
  - ~ blue eyed children can have felt tip pens/ brown eyed only have pencils
  - ~ blue eyed children can talk whilst they carry out the activity/ brown eyed must be silent
  - ~ blue eyed children given sweets/ brown eyed not
- Ask both groups to draw a picture of a rainbow and Noah's Ark – praise the blue eyed group, not the brown. (5 mins to draw picture approx).

#### **Discussion Points** (10 mins)

- ~ How did the blue eyed group feel?
  - ~ How did the brown eyed group feel?
  - ~ Was it fair?
  - ~ Is this a good way of treating people?
  - ~ Ask children to give examples of when they have seen somebody treated unfairly or treated differently – chart up if possible.
- Reward brown eyed children and stress this was just a demonstration.

#### **Bible Link** (5 mins)

- Talk about the story of the Good Samaritan

#### **Summary** (5 mins)

- Talk about how Jesus treated people

**Prayer** (1 min)

*Heavenly Father,  
Thank you for letting us see how we make enemies for no good reasons  
and how sad it makes people feel to be treated differently or unfairly.  
Help us to be more like Jesus and to treat everyone with kindness.  
Amen.*

**Contributors:**

Pam Kellett,  
Sue Lees &  
Jane Nicholson - St Paul, Astley Bridge

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## **LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR**

**AGE RANGE:** 7 - 10 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 60 mins

**AIM:** 1) Who is our neighbour?  
2) What loving our neighbour means  
3) The example set by Jesus who loves us all

**SESSION OUTLINE:**

**Introduction/Opening Activity** (10 mins)

- Who is your neighbour? – Discussion  
Expect answers regarding people who live next door and then extend it to include other people – see if this happens naturally before prompting. Hope to encompass people we don't know, nationally and internationally ie everyone.

**Words to Describe Neighbours** (10 mins)

- Divide the children into teams. Give each team a different list of words concerning neighbours, which they then mime for the other team to guess eg harmony, friendship, forgiveness, support, reassurance, tolerance, understanding, happy, sad, tearful. Emphasise that they are mainly words describing emotions/feelings.

**When Loving Your Neighbour is Difficult** (10 mins)

- Brief discussion: difficult to love people who bully, call names, don't want to be friends, people we don't know.
- This may lead on to current world topics eg war, famine, crime etc.

## Circle Time

(15 mins)

- Children in pairs in a circle. They talk to their partners about there being some good in everyone, something to like.
- Ask them to think of something positive about the other person and then go round the circle with everyone saying one thing that they like about the other person

## Bible Story and Song

(10 mins)

- Matthew 25:31-46: 'I was hungry and you fed me ...'
- Sing 'When I Needed a Neighbour' by Sydney Carter

## Closing Prayer

*Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for all our neighbours  
(children then add names individually of people they know or don't know  
but who are their neighbours)  
And we thank you that you love us all. Amen*

## Contributors:

Christine Hustwick  
Barbara Christopher &  
Mary Christopher - St Mary, Greenfield

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## **RESPECT AND RULES**

**AGE RANGE:** 11+ yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 2 hours

**AIM:** To encourage discussion on respecting each other and showing the need for mutual respect. Allowing them to discover respect and rules are needed.

### **WHAT TO COVER IN SESSION:**

- Have Christian music (eg The Tribe, Band with No Name) playing in the background all of the time, adjusted to the appropriate volume.
- Make up ten commandments/rules.
- We need to respect children/youth to be respected.
- Graffiti board – going against the rules.
- Question time – young people ask questions relating to respect and rules (eg why are children automatically supposed to respect parents and adults etc).
- Organise petitions ie Save The Park to show respect for property and possessions and by doing this, showing respect for the people who own or use them.
- Organise clean up campaign – litter pick.

- Find theme related Bible verse and do 'drama' based on verses found in small groups (Bible readings Matthew 19:18, 1 Timothy 4:12).
- Team games – working in a team and following rules:
  - ~ Quiz – working in pairs/teams
  - ~ Newspaper game – 2 teams, long room divided into two sides, scattered newspapers (vetted). Throw balls of newspaper into other team's half. The side that ends with the most newspapers on their side loses
  - ~ Volleyball – use soft ball or balloon: putting into practice the need for rules
- Snack time ie hot dogs/drinks.
- Chat time.
- Prayer time – Topics start with personal ones asked for by the children and move on to the leaders suggesting relevant prayers to do with respect. Hopefully the children have an input into the latter.

**Contributors:**

Barry Ellison                    - St Mary, Haughton Green  
 Ann Mizera &  
 Peter Shone                    - St Stephen, Audenshaw  
 Julia Walter                    - St Michael, Bamford

## **PERSONAL ISSUES**

### **BELONGING**

(Belonging to Jesus)

**AGE RANGE:** 7 - 10 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 30 mins

**AIM:** To get the children to understand about belonging to the church family and to Jesus

**SESSION OUTLINE:**

**Introduction**

- Say what we are covering today.

**Opening activity**

- Do a 'thought shower' asking the children what groups they belong to: family, cubs, brownies etc.

## Game

- 'Happy Family' cards. Split the children into groups. Give each group one card of a particular family and hide the other cards. The children have to find the full set of the family.

## Discussion

- Discuss what it means to belong to a family and the church family.
- Look at all the activities that the church family do eg pray/ sing/ eat/ talk/ take holidays together.

## Activity

- Complete a booklet entitled 'I belong to', with the following pages:

|                                          |                                                       |                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I BELONG<br>TO ....                      | Name<br>_____<br>Age<br>_____                         | I belong to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• cubs</li><li>• school</li><li>• family</li><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul> |
| In my family<br>there are<br><br>picture | I belong to<br>the Church<br>family of<br><br>picture | I belong to<br>Jesus.<br><br>What does<br>this mean?                                                                                |

## Prayer

*Dear Jesus,  
Thank you that we belong to you and that we can trust in you.  
Amen.*

## Contributors:

Jan McCabe &  
Josie Menmuir - St Mary, Balderstone  
Ve Nutter - St James, Thornham  
Erica Taylor - St Mary, Balderstone

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## **BEREAVEMENT/DEATH**

**AGE RANGE:** 7 -11 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 30 mins per session

**AIM:** To deal with questions/issues for children in school/Sunday school resulting from the sudden death of a parent/friend/member of staff

### **BACKGROUND:**

The group chose the subject because of the recent sudden deaths of their vicar and also of the young father of a child in Sunday school. What emerged from their planning discussion were a number of areas to focus on in a series of sessions.

### **FOCUSES FOR SESSIONS:**

- 1/. Initial discussion is better started perhaps with the death of a pet: feelings of grief to be allowed.
- 2/. Life cycles, process of birth, leading to death: the knowledge that it isn't always old people that die.
- 3/. On a person's death, celebrate their life: what people have achieved during their life time.

NB: Let all persons know that the group leaders are available to talk further whenever the need arises.

### **POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:**

- Talking about personal experiences.
- Using a range of books that have simple stories eg dealing with the death of a pet or grandparent.
- Make a collection of items that would remind one of a person's life; or children could put together a scrap book of pets.
- Make a 'Precious Box' to keep treasures/reminders of the person (eg scraps of material from clothes, photos, letters and postcards, birthday cards)
- Use Bible passages that deal with death but don't make reference to the resurrection.
- Encourage children to write prayers/poetry – remembering to pray for those who are suffering because of the loss of a loved one.

**Contributors:**

Chris Chadderton

Cath Fletcher &amp;

Kath Roberts

- St Chad, Uppermill

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**BREAKING AND MAKING UP****AGE RANGE:** 4 - 7 yrs**AIM:** To discuss various friendships and to help children to cope with break up of friendships.**SESSION OUTLINE:****Introduction**

- Candle pot. Children lead prayer saying thank you for friends, mum, dad, grandparents, sisters, brother etc and everyone in the whole wide world. Thank you to Jesus for being our friend.

**Story**

- Picture book called 'I'm Sorry' by Sam McBratney tells of close friendship between two children. One day they break up, then they make up again.
- For older children: Bible reading Matthew 5:23-24 – make peace before offering your gift at the altar.

**Activity**

- Each child draws round their own hand then cuts it out and colours it. Stick it next to someone else's hand so that they have interlocking fingers. Write names on the hands. The hands could also be stuck in a 'friendship circle', where each hand is connected to another in a ring.
- Make the link with hand shaking at the sharing of The Peace
- NB This activity can be used as a teaching aid throughout the teaching programme, with hands representing, for example, Protestants and Catholics or aspects of racism or world issues.

**Song**

- Sing 'Jesus' love is very wonderful' and dance in a circle holding hands.

**Contributors:**

Lynne Connolly

Joanne Eaves

Kath Halstead &amp;

Audrey Wildblood - St Clement, Spotland

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**CHOICES****AGE RANGE:** 6 - 8 yrs**SESSION LENGTH:** 35 mins**AIM:** To understand the consequences of their actions/choices**SESSION OUTLINE:****Introduction** (5 mins)

- Ask the children what they think choice means.
- Write on cards and put cards on wall/flip chart

**Opening Activity** (10 mins)

- Hand out cards with various activities on eg washing up, playing football, dancing, children in school, someone helping someone. Cards also have numbers on 1-6. Children roll dice and pick up card with the number on they have rolled.
- When child picks up card, ask them if they would have chosen this one. Is it what they really want to do?
- The point is to show that you don't always get to do what you would choose, but have to think of others as well.

**Bible Story** (10 mins)

- Read the story of 'The Good Samaritan' – Luke 10:25-37
- Tell an updated version based on Harry Potter characters: Malfoy is hurt on the street; Ron Weasley ignores him; Harry Potter helps him.
- Discuss whether Ron made the correct choice; ask the children whether they would do what Ron did or what Harry did and why; ask them what would have happened if they'd have left Malfoy.

**Summing Up** (5 mins)

- Ask again about choices.
- Read out cards written during the introduction.
- Any more ideas?
- Try to ascertain if they understand about consequences of the choices made.

## **Concluding Prayer** (5 mins)

*Dear God,  
Please help us to make the right choices, even if our friends tell us something different. Help us to know the difference between right and wrong.  
Amen*

### **Contributors:**

Deborah Morris - St Michael, Ashton-under-Lyne  
Ian Phillips &  
Jean Phillips - Christ Church, Ashton-under-Lyne  
Megan Thompson - St Chad, Uppermill

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## **CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS**

***'Stop! In the name of the Lord!'***

**AGE RANGE:** 3 - 5 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 45 mins

**AIM:** Considering others before we act

### **SESSION OUTLINE:**

#### **Opening activity**

- 'Hello, my name is ...' game, played in a circle: introduce yourself and ask the wellbeing of the person next to yourself.

#### **Prayer**

- 'Be near me Lord Jesus'

#### **Story**

- Visual story with a moral eg the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) or the story of the little donkey (little donkey taken from its mother for Palm Sunday)

#### **Mini-discussion**

- Based on the story and exploring the theme of caring for others.

#### **Craft activity**

- Make a collage of two or more different body outlines of different ethnic backgrounds joined together holding hands.
- Finish by all holding hands and singing 'He gave me eyes so that I could see.'

## **Conclusion**

- Involve the children to collaborate with prayer.
- Show collage to congregation.

## **Contributors:**

Pam Coleano &  
Ruth McSweeney - St Aidan, Sudden  
Maureen Read - St Margaret, Heywood  
Tracey Street - St Aidan, Sudden

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## **DEATH**

**AGE RANGE:** 6 - 7 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 45 mins

**AIM:** To cope with emotions and understand that there is life after death

## **SESSION OUTLINE:**

### **Introduction**

- Read the story of 'Badger's Parting Gifts' and show the pictures
- Ask the children if they have felt like one of the animals in the story; discuss how they feel.

### **Activity 1**

- Produce a special object and say who this reminds you of and why. Pass it round, giving the children the opportunity to say something about it if they want.
- We know that as well as leaving us these special memories and gifts, that those who have died will be with Jesus.

### **Bible Reading**

- Matthew 28:20 – Jesus will be with you always, until the end of time.

### **Activity 2**

- Make cut-out faces and ask the children to draw their face showing how they feel when they think of their special person or animal who is no longer with them.
- Ask if they have anyone in mind.

## Action Song

- 'Jesus Love Is Very Wonderful'

## Prayer

*Dear Jesus,  
Thank you for the wonderful memories of those who have died. We give thanks for all they have told us and shared with us. Amen.*

## Contributors:

Godfrey Adams &  
Louise Nowicki - St Chad, Uppermill  
Maureen Simmill &  
Liz Wood - Kilngreen Mission, Diggle

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## FRIENDS

**AGE RANGE:** 3 – 12 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 50 mins

**AIM:** To love and care for one another.

### SESSION OUTLINE:

**Bible reading** – John 15:12 – Jesus said, 'Love one another as I have loved you.'

**Game** (10 mins)

- Set up two 'stations' in the room – one marked 'yes' the other 'no'. Ask questions relating to friends eg 'Do you share sweets?' – to answer, the children run to the appropriate 'station'. Twenty questions in total.

**Bible story** (10 mins)

- Mark 2:1-12: four men carry a friend to Jesus and lower him through the roof.

**Questions & discussion** (5mins)

- On the subject of the Bible story.

**Activity** (20 mins)

- Construct a house from a box. Put a hole in the roof. Make men from pipe cleaners. Then children can act out the story for themselves.

**Closing worship** (5 mins)

- Chorus: 'Peter and John Went to Pray' (Junior Praise)
- Prayer:

*Dear Jesus,  
Thank you for my friends,  
thank you for my family,  
Thank you that you care and love us.  
Amen*

**Contributors:**

F Buckley

B Donaldson

V Lowe &

J Mounfield

- Church of the Saviour, Collyhurst

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**HEALING/ ILLNESS**

**AGE RANGE:** 7 – 11 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 40 mins

**AIM:** To bring awareness and understanding and relate it to scriptures

**SESSION OUTLINE:**

**Introduction/ opening activity** (5 mins)

- Discussion – knowing someone who is ill.
- Have the children ever been ill – what does it feel like?
- How can you help someone who is ill?

**Bible reading** (5 mins)

- Mark 5:21-45 – Jairus' Daughter.

**Discussion** (10 mins)

- Talk about faith.
- Discuss issues surrounding any contemporary example of a child for whom a campaign to secure treatment has been launched (eg Robyn Brooks – girl local to Rochdale, having treatment in USA – not treated in NHS).

**Re-tell story** (5 mins)

- Tell the Bible story from a different angle – told by Jairus' daughter.

**Craft activity** (10 mins)

- Make a 'get well' card – leave children to decide.

**Prayer** (5 mins)

- Children to make a prayer.

**Contributors:**

Joanne Elcock - St Aidan, Sudden

Jean France - All Saints, Hamer

Ann Montgomery - St Aidan, Sudden

Stephen Shepherd - All Saints, Hamer

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## **PEER PRESSURE**

**AGE RANGE:** 10 – 17 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 40 mins

**AIM:** To let them know they are not alone.  
Not to be school-like; to be open and keep them interested.  
For us to listen, to learn from them.

**SESSION OUTLINE:**

**Issue of the week** (5 mins)

- Relevant Bible verses: Mark 4:35-41; Romans 8:26-27

**Brainstorm** (5 mins)

- Peer pressure: what it means to each one, what it involves, issues raised, their ideas on solutions to problems they are experiencing – how they can be helped by the church family.

**Game** (20 mins)

- Grid similar to 'snakes and ladders' on theme of 'the game of life'. Birth, baptism, going to school, moving on to high school, teenage years, confirmation, exams, their future after school: the ups and downs of life.

## **Conclusion** (10 mins)

- Ask each individual to put an issue they wish a member of the church family to pray about for them on a piece of paper in an envelope. These will be put at the back of church and volunteers will be asked for from church to take an envelope home to pray about for the week. An eye-opener for many adults in the church.

### **Contributors:**

Linda Bennett &  
Eddie Blackburn - St Mary, Balderstone  
Elaine Fowler - St Aidan, Sudden  
Margaret Kershaw - St Clement, Spotland  
Tracy Marshall - St Mary, Balderstone

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## **RELATIONSHIPS**

**AGE RANGE:** Year 6

**SESSION LENGTH:** 60 mins

**AIM:** To show that God wants to be our friend.

### **SESSION OUTLINE:**

#### **Opening Prayer**

*Father we thank you for this morning and ask that you will be here by your Holy Spirit. May we come to know you in a more special way. Amen.*

#### **Introduction/Way in – Sock Game**

- As many pairs of socks as possible and one odd one. Put them all in a pile and ask children to match them up. At the end ask the child with the odd sock to stand up. Explain that sometimes we might feel like the odd one out. With God we are never on our own – He never excludes anyone.
- Ask if there is anyone at school or at home whom we know is always on their own or maybe feeling left out. How can we help?

#### **Worship**

- Whoopah Wahey (from the 'Whoopah Wahey' CD by Doug Horley)
- Jesus is a Friend of Mine ('I Want to be Like Jesus' CD Vineyard)
- Father God I Wonder (Ishmael)

**Break** – drinks and biscuits

## **Word** – The Story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

- Role-play the story, using the child who had the odd sock at the beginning to be Zacchaeus. (One leader to read the passage, whilst another leader/helper encourages the children to act out what they hear – lots of booing and hissing for the bad guy and cheering for Jesus)
- Explain: Zacchaeus was excluded (left out) because of his actions to others, nobody liked him. But Jesus loved him anyway. Jesus was interested in him, knew his name, wanted to see where he lived, acted like a friend. Because Jesus treated him in this way Zacchaeus responded to this love by being sorry for his actions and went on to put right his mistakes.

## **Response**

- Explain: Just as He did with Zacchaeus, Jesus gives us the invitation to be His friend. If our favourite football/pop star (David Beckham, Gareth Gates) asked if they could be our friend and visit us at home what would we say? (Yes!) But does David Beckham know our name? (Highly unlikely but have an alternative just in case!) Jesus does! And even though we are naughty and do things He doesn't like He still wants to be our friend. All we need to do is say we are truly sorry.
- Play the song 'I'm Special'. Children could lie down at this stage. Ask the Holy Spirit to really speak to their hearts.
- Pray: *Father thank you that you love us so very much. We are truly sorry for all the wrong things we have done. Lord Jesus we want you to be our friend. Help us to love you too. Amen.*

## **Contributors:**

Kim Bradbury,  
Helen Cowan &  
Joyce Herdson

- St Andrew, Radcliffe

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## **WHAT IS A FRIEND?**

**AGE RANGE:** 3 - 5 yrs

**SESSION LENGTH:** 40 mins

**AIM:** To help children to know what friendship is; to help them to know that Jesus is their friend.

## **SESSION OUTLINE:**

### **Preliminary Discussion**

- I have a friend called ..... What is *your* friend's name?
- Do you watch 'Tweenies' or 'Bob the Builder'? Who are friends in those programmes?

- Friends are people you can laugh with, and friends are those you can tell secrets to.

### **Song**

- Each child sings: '..... is a friend of mine'
- All sing: 'Halleluiah, amen.'

### **Puppets**

- Use puppets to show examples of friends meeting each other, talking to each other, standing next to each other, arms around each other. (Use animals as well as people).

### **Activity**

- Draw a friend, or make a model of one with resources provided.

### **Bible**

- Read John 15: 14 & 15
- Children clap when they hear the word 'friends'
- Note that Jesus had friends and talks about friends.

### **Hymn**

- 'What a Friend we Have in Jesus' or 'Jesus is a Friend of Mine'.

### **Prayer**

*Dear God,  
 Thank you for Jesus's friends.  
 Thank you for my family, who are also good friends.  
 Thank you for my friends who play with me  
 Look after us, dear God, for we are all your friends.  
 Amen.*

### **Contributors:**

Jenny Brewin - St Philip, Radcliffe  
 Chich Hewitt - St Thomas & St John, Radcliffe  
 Jacqui Jackson - St Margaret, Prestwich

# A PROCESS FOR SESSION PLANNING

## I. CHOOSE YOUR TOPIC

How do you go about choosing the topics you cover with the children? How would you *like* to go about it? Perhaps you meet as a team of children's leaders to discuss the work you are going to do in the weeks or even months ahead. But your ministry with the children is part of the teaching ministry of the whole parish – how does your programme relate to the parish teaching programme as a whole? Do you ever meet with the other ministers to discuss a whole parish programme? Do the ordained ministers and lay readers in your parish meet to discuss their teaching? A review of the way that the teaching ministry with children is planned could inspire a look at teaching with all ages in the parish!

Some things to bear in mind when choosing a new topic for your work with children

- Is it relevant to the children's lives and concerns?
- How does it fit in to the long term programme for the children?
- How does it relate to the adult teaching programme?

## 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

We can often make assumptions in the Church – about what other people think and believe, but also about our *own* thoughts and beliefs. How often do we have time or *make* time to reflect on the major issues of our faith and its relationship to the world? To grow in our faith we need to continually revisit issues throughout our lives and review our thoughts and feelings about them in the light of the experiences God has given us. But how do we find the time?

Preparing to explore a topic with children could provide just the impetus we need to look at issues afresh. Before planning a session on any topic with children, take time to reflect honestly on what it means to you. Don't automatically reach for 'stock responses' – try to be open to new insights, and be prepared to be surprised. Don't be worried if you come up with difficult questions, and don't be afraid of showing the children that you have unanswered questions.

It is often said that because children's leaders are rarely able to be in church they miss out on spiritual nurture. But if we view our work with children as a shared search for a deeper knowledge of God – a search in which we are as actively involved as the children – then our work with them will feed us spiritually too.

## 3. WHAT TO EXPLORE WITH THE CHILDREN

For a variety of reasons not all the issues raised by a topic for an adult will be appropriate for exploration with a group of children. When you have reflected on your chosen topic at your own level, you can consider which of the issues you have thought about would be suitable to explore in a session with children.

Some things to bear in mind when choosing what to cover with children

- strike a balance between factual things you think it's important that they should 'know' about an issue, and more open material that you think it is important they reflect on;
- consider what is appropriate for the ages and maturity of your children, bearing in mind faith development and child development in general;
- will the children be able to relate the material to their own experience?

#### **4. LOOK FOR RESOURCES**

Now that you have an idea of what aspects of a particular issue you want to explore with your group, draw together the resources in scripture, our faith tradition, and other expressions of human experience that will throw light on the subject. Remember, words that can have a deep and rich meaning for an adult will not necessarily have the same meaning for a child!

#### **5. PLAN THE SESSION**

Now, finally, you can get down to the practicalities of what you are actually going to do with the children. Which aspects of the topic will you focus on? How will you present the material? What will you need to get ready? Who will do what?

The list of things to bear in mind when planning the session is a long one!

- Have you arrived at a clearly stated aim for the session, that everyone can understand? Could the children understand it?
- Is the language you plan to use throughout the session meaningful for the children?
- Are you remembering the practical parameters within which you will have to work: number and ages of children; groupings; premises; available resources, both physical and in personnel; duration of session?
- What structure will the session have?
- Do all the elements contribute to achieving the overall aim?
- Will you provide some alternative activities? Will they be differentiated to cover a range of ages and abilities? Will the children be able to choose?
- Is there a balance of hear/see/say/do activities across the session?
- Will there be a variety of different groupings during the session (eg pairs, small groups, whole group)?
- Are there 'open' activities that will encourage children to wonder and discuss?
- Are the activities achievable yet still challenging?
- How will you evaluate the success of the individual activities and the session as a whole?

## **POSSIBLE ELEMENTS IN THE STRUCTURE OF A SESSION**

- Welcome/ 'notices'
- Opening prayer/ worship
- Starter/ engagement activity
- Introduction to the theme (doesn't have to be a talk!)
- Scripture/ faith link
- Main activity
- Thinking time – personal application
- Response/ worship/ prayer
- Prepare to 'report back' in church
- 'A sense of an ending'

*NB The order can be flexible, and some elements could be repeated or combined.*

Steve Dixon  
May 2003

## ART/ CRAFT

3D pictures  
Badges  
Banners  
Bookmarks  
Bracelets  
Calendars  
Cards  
Collage  
Colouring in  
Communal creative work  
Crib  
Crowns  
Cut & glue  
Decorations  
Drawing  
Easter garden  
Flags  
Flick books  
Flower making  
Flower arranging  
Foil modelling  
Frieze  
Glass-painting  
Handprinting  
Happy/sad faces  
Hats  
Instrument making  
Invitations  
Kite making  
Laminated prayer cards  
Lego/ Duplo  
Look at pictures  
Masks  
Mobiles  
Models  
Origami  
Painting  
Palm crosses  
Paper boats  
Paper chains  
Pebble-painting  
Photographs  
Play-doh  
Posters  
Potato printing  
Presents

## ART/ CRAFT cont.

Puppet making  
Rubbings  
Sculpture  
Sewing  
Soap crosses  
Stencils  
Stained glass colouring  
Streamers  
T-shirts

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## DRAMA/ MOVEMENT

Dance  
Dressing up  
Hot seating  
Improvisation  
Mime  
Movement  
Puppets  
Role play  
Scripted drama  
Sign language

\* \* \*

## MUSIC

Action songs  
Background music  
Body music  
Christian pop concert  
Instrumental work  
Listening  
Responsive songs  
Sing songs  
Songs with props  
Write lyrics  
Write music

## STORIES AND PRESENTATIONS etc

Children as speakers  
Comic strips  
Diary  
Fact sheet  
Letters (persuasive)  
Newspaper article  
OHP  
Older children help younger  
Powerpoint  
Rap  
Read story  
Real life stories  
Respond to key words  
Retell story (different viewpoint)  
Retell story (own words)  
Scriptwriting  
Slides  
Sorting exercises  
Video  
Visiting speaker  
Work sheets  
Write a poem  
Write a story  
Write a Thank you letter

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## DISCUSSION etc

Chat (informal)  
Comparisons  
Debate  
Discussion (focussed)  
Interpret a story  
Object focus  
Question & answer  
Retell an incident  
Share news  
Surveys

## GAMES

Activity sheets  
Ball games  
Balloon games  
Blindfold games  
Blow football  
Card games  
Challenges  
Charades  
Circle games  
Codebreakers  
Competitions  
Consequences  
Count how many ...  
Crosswords  
Games night  
Guessing games  
Hide & Seek  
Items in a bag  
Jigsaws  
'Just a minute'  
Kite flying  
Matching games  
Memory games  
Missing word  
Odd one Out  
Parachute games  
Panel games  
Party games  
Pass the phrase  
Puzzles  
Quiz  
Races  
Run & jump  
Sand play  
Spot the difference  
Team games  
Tig  
Treasure trails  
Water play  
What do you notice?  
(in picture)  
Word search  
Yes/no game

## PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Action prayers  
All together  
Bubbles  
Candles  
Circle time  
Feast/ food  
In groups/pairs  
Listen to a prayer  
Music  
Nature  
'Pass the Bible' prayer  
time  
Pictures  
Prayer board  
Prayer cards  
Prayer diary  
Prayer tent  
Prayer tree  
Prayer walking  
Read a prayer  
Requests  
Senses  
Silent  
Well known prayers  
Write a prayer

## FOOD & DRINK

Biscuits  
Cakes  
Doughnuts  
Drinks  
Make/ bake  
Sharing  
Symbolic

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## SUNDRY

Excursions  
Nature trail  
Plant things  
Service preparation  
Special events  
Walks  
Tour of Church