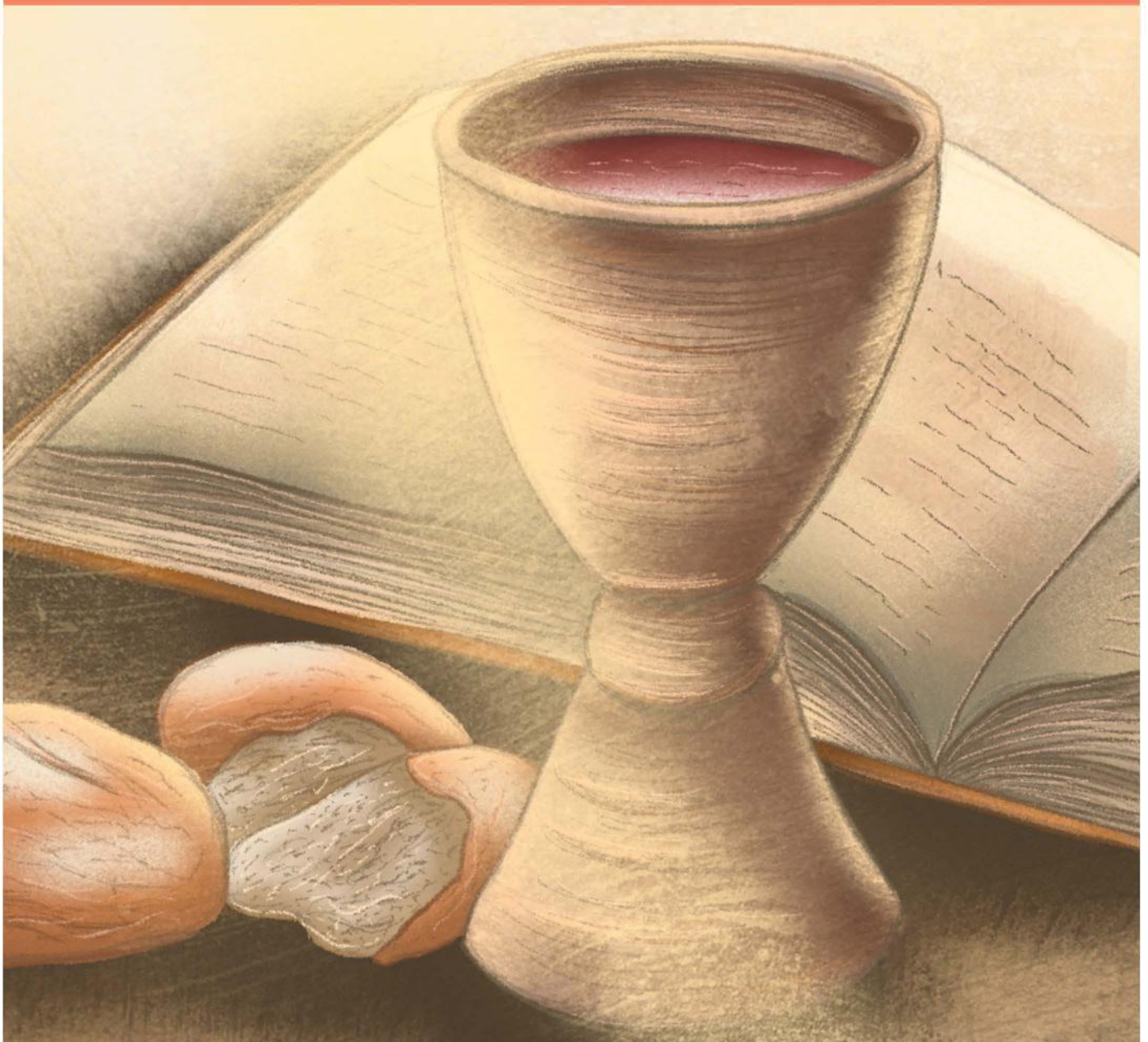


Facilitating Communion and Collective Worship in schools



Versatile weekly resources for
Collective Worship | Christian Unions | Clubs

Roots offers versatile resources that can help you connect the Bible with life today for school and college students.

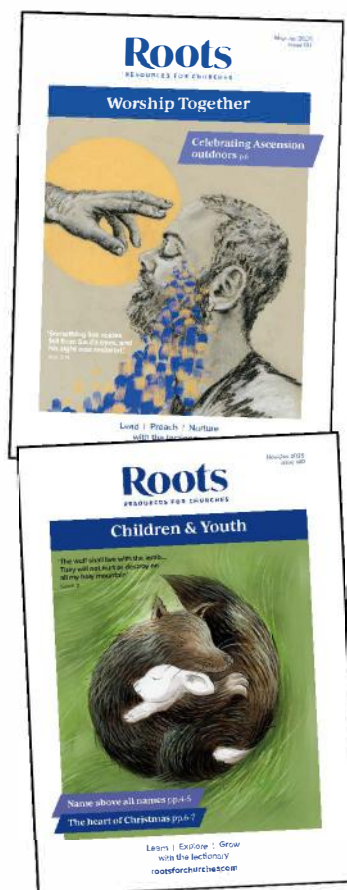
We publish new weekly resources every two months – and add up-to-the-minute reflections for young people online each week.

We're delighted to share with you some of our brand new resources for Autumn 2025, as well as a selection of articles and case studies from our Bread & Wine Communion materials. We hope that these will inspire you to see how Roots could support you in your ministry.



Melanie

Melanie Cave, Managing Director, Roots



3

Bread & Wine: Communion prayers and articles

Worship Together

Children & Youth weekly resources

16

Resources to use with primary children | Under 5s

Children & Youth

20

Songs | Prayers | Resources to use with ages 11+

Children & Youth

Worship Together weekly resources

24

Bible notes | Talk ideas | Prayers

Worship Together

26

Resources to use with sixth form / FE / intergenerational

Worship Together

28

Seasonal Collective Worship resource: *Name above all names*

30

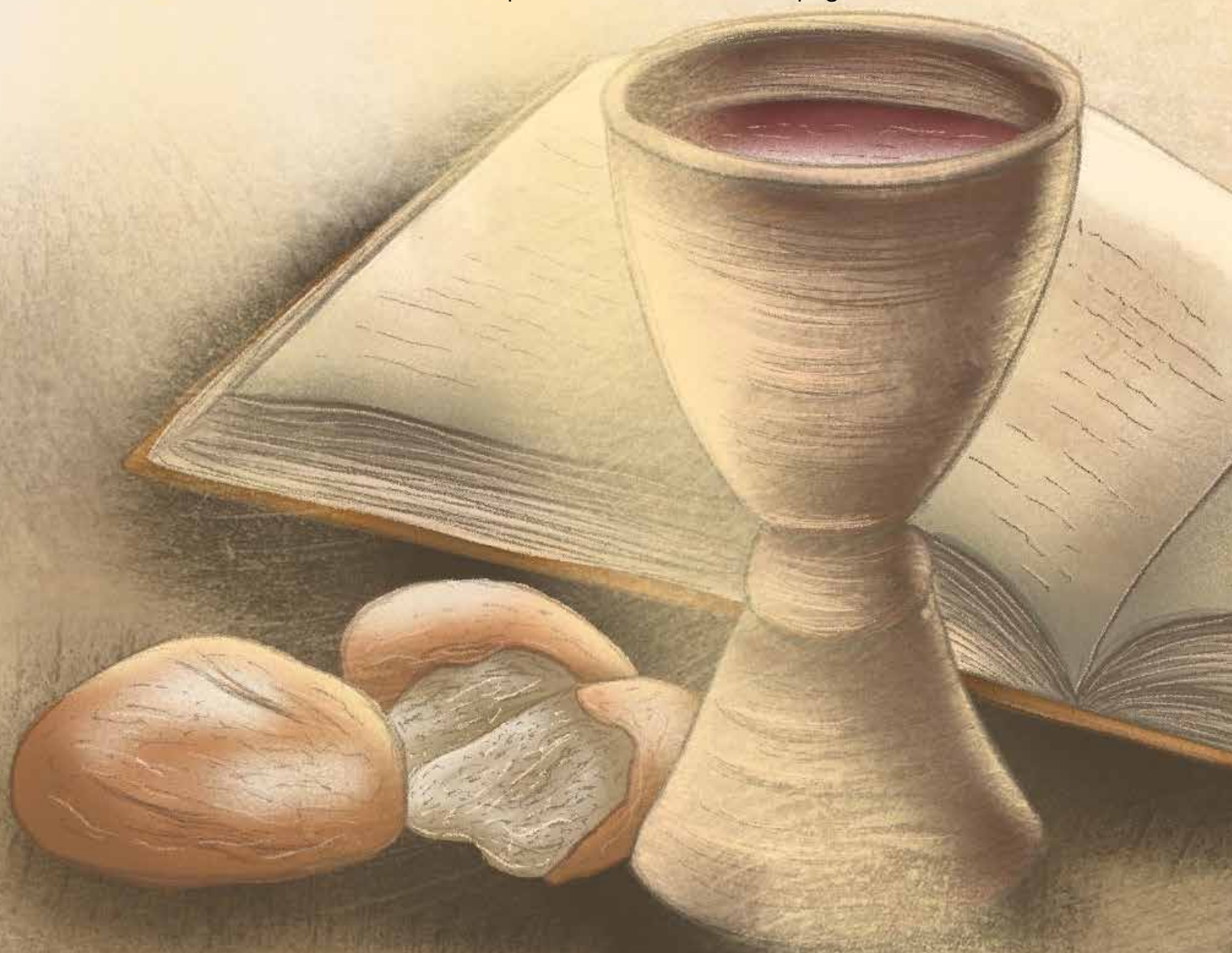
Seasonal CU / lunch club resource: *The heart of Christmas*

Bread & Wine

An invitation to Intergenerational Communion

Bread & Wine is part of Roots' Worship Together resources, offering you Communion prayers that are accessible and meaningful for all ages. You can use it alongside our engaging weekly material, to help you plan and lead our all-age Communion worship.

- Communion prayers for Christ the King and Advent: see pages 4-5
- Articles on different aspects of Communion: see pages 6-14



Bread & Wine



November

King of a turning world (Christ the King)

These prayers work with the Feast of Christ the King on 23 November.

Gather

A gathering prayer

Jesus our King, this week has been full of trouble and worry. We come to you, our shelter and our protection. Remind us of your power, your strength and your faithfulness towards those who love you. You are king over all of our lives. **Amen.**

An invitation to penitence

Jesus is king over the heavens and the earth and has power and authority over all things. We often allow the fears and stresses of our daily life to overwhelm us, taking our eyes off the one who saves and protects us. Let us return and fix our gaze on him again.

A Kyrie confession

Father, you have shown your strength in our lives, yet we forget and take refuge in distractions and wrong behaviour.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Jesus, you have promised to never leave nor forsake us, yet we are anxious and afraid.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Spirit, you empower us to live lives worthy of the gospel, yet we hide our faith and are quiet.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

An all-age prayer of confession

Jesus, forgive us for not turning to you when we are in trouble. We are sorry that we doubt both your strength to change situations and your willingness to help us. We are sorry that we have not told others about you when they were in need. We are sorry that our anxieties and stress undermine our witness to your life and power, by your grace forgive us and help us to start afresh today. **Amen.**

An assurance of forgiveness

Lord God, your judgements are good and right, and you are working to make us worthy of your kingdom. We receive your forgiveness and commit ourselves again to seeking refuge only in you, strengthened by your Holy Spirit within us. **Amen.**

Share the Word

Gospel acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia, the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Alleluia.

Sacrament

Introduction to the Peace

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea.' *Psalms 46:1-2*

By God's grace, we share his peace.

The peace of the Lord...

Short Preface for a Thanksgiving prayer

Jesus, we thank you that you are not only our king, but that you are king over all the world. In the midst of all that is happening in the world right now, we can trust that all things belong to you, and that you will return to bring all things safely into your kingdom.

Please refer to resources from your own denomination for Christ the King – see links [WEB](#).

Go with God

A post-Communion prayer

King Jesus, you gave yourself on the cross so that we might be brought into your kingdom.

And you have fed us with yourself today.

Fill us again with your Holy Spirit, and strengthen us

to follow you whatever is happening in the world around us.

Amen.

Prayers of blessing

May the King of heaven and earth protect us from all harm, fill us with his joy and equip us for his service, now and for ever. **Amen.**

May Christ the King keep us certain of his return, faithful in serving others and resilient in sharing the good news of his forgiveness and peace. And the blessing...

December

Advent: Come, Lord Jesus

These prayers work with any of the Advent weeks.

Gather

A gathering prayer

Lord Jesus, we look at the world around us: the anger, the suffering and the pain. We look at our own lives and our doubts, our worries and our struggle and we say, 'Come'. Come and bring healing, come and bring peace, come and set us, our lives and our world back into a right relationship with you. **Amen.**

An invitation to penitence

We know that Jesus is coming back but we live our lives as if he isn't. We have ignored his commands and been slow to show his love to others. Let us seek his forgiveness and prepare ourselves for his coming in all we think, do and say.

A Kyrie confession

Father, you made us stewards of your creation, but we have used it up for our own comfort. Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Jesus, you asked us to show your love and compassion to all, but we have been selfish and hard-hearted towards those around us.

Christ, have mercy

Christ, have mercy

Spirit, you empower us to share the good news of Jesus, but we have kept it to ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

An all-age prayer of confession

Jesus, forgive us for living as if you were not coming again, for putting off until later your call to keep your commands and to follow you. We have put ourselves first and ignored the needs of those around us, we have abused your creation making our own comfort our priority and we have shut out those who are not easy for us to love. In your great love, forgive us, cleanse us and heal us so that we might be your people again. **Amen.**

An assurance of forgiveness

Jesus, this world is yours and we are your people. We thank you for your forgiveness and we receive your peace, strengthen us to follow your commands now and forever. **Amen.**

Share the Word

Gospel acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia, prepare the way for the Lord's coming, make his paths straight.

Alleluia.

Sacrament

Introduction to the Peace

Revelation 22:20 says, 'He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon"'. Amen, come Lord Jesus.

The peace of the coming Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Short Preface for a Thanksgiving prayer

Jesus, you are our Lord and you have not left us on our own. All things were created by your power and all things will be brought under your authority. We praise you for that you are coming soon and will make all things new. Our trust and our hope is in you alone. **Amen.**

Please refer to resources from your own denomination for Advent – see links [WEB](#).

Go with God

A post-Communion prayer

Lord Jesus, your sacrifice has opened the way for us to be with God. You have taken our sin, our shame, our fears and our pain, and defeated them on the cross. We give you thanks and praise, and ask that you make us worthy of the calling you have given us by the power of your Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Prayers of blessing

May the coming of our Lord Jesus inspire us to live each day ready to see him and quick to share his love and care with those to whom he is sending us. **Amen.**

Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again, the one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. **Amen.** *1 Thessalonians 5:23*

Can I use Bread & Wine?

For more guidance in using the Bread & Wine resources and case studies of celebrating Communion in different contexts, see [WEB](#).

Bread & Wine

Draw near with faith



Mary Hawes, formerly National Going for Growth (Children's and Youth) Adviser for the Church of England, offers thoughts on including children and young people in Holy Communion services.

Recently, a class of Year 1 children (6-year-olds) visited the church where I serve as a priest. Their teachers wanted them to experience an actual church rather than just the photos they had seen during RE lessons. From the moment they entered the church, they wanted to get as close as possible to anything I was talking about – they hung over the side of the font, fascinated by the plastic bowl that held the water; they wanted to climb into the pulpit to see the view; they exclaimed at the ancient Bible on our lectern; and when seated in the choir stalls, couldn't resist retrieving the hymn books, sheet music and packets of tissues left by the choir on Sunday.

Children are not passive observers – they are intuitive, eager explorers wanting to be close to what's going on, to be involved in activity and to have the opportunity to ask questions. When they are present at Holy Communion they are also curious and want to be engaged, but it can be a challenge to do this meaningfully. Here are a few simple starting points to consider.

What's happening?

It's easy to take for granted that everyone knows what and why things are happening in a Holy Communion service. Holding a 'What's going on?' session can offer a chance to explain what's happening, give children (and their parents/carers) the opportunity to hear why we do what we do, ask questions, and learn any congregational responses (if these are used regularly in your service).

Ask what's needed

Have a conversation with children and young people about how they feel included/excluded from Holy Communion. Ask them to suggest ways they would like to become more involved, or which would help them become more included. Sometimes our adult perspective doesn't match theirs – so it's best to ask.

Where are we now?

A simple timeline or clock can help parents/carers let their child to know what's coming next in the service. 'Look – it's time to listen to the Bible. I wonder what we will hear today.' 'It's nearly time to get the Communion table ready – what can you see happening?'

Include me

Consider the whole of the service in which Holy Communion is taking place. How can children and young people be involved in its various aspects – welcoming people? The readings? Leading the prayers? Helping prepare the Communion table?

Make it interactive

Spiritual styles [WEB](#) remind us that gestures, symbols and visual images are important in helping children, young people and adults come close to God. Look at the pattern of your service. Are there obvious areas where gesture or symbol could be used? Where the projection or provision of visual images or tactile objects could be incorporated? The Messy Church Eucharist, although intend for an Anglican context, offers some excellent ideas for places in worship (greeting, confession, intercessions, the Eucharistic Prayer) where an interactive aspect could be used [WEB](#).



Make it musical

Putting words to music helps with remembering things – which means singing some of the repeated phases or prayers in a service can make it easier to join in.

The Revd Ally Barrett has used the tune of 'Kum ba yah' as the setting for prayers and responses used in Holy Communion, but there are many other possibilities that could be explored [WEB](#).



And, on the subject of music – when children and young people are present, try to include songs and hymns that have a simple tune, a refrain that can easily be picked up, and which espouse the theology of your denomination or congregation. Smaller children will enjoy using musical instruments; older children and young people might be invited to be part of the choir/singing group/worship band.

Liturgy bags and boxes

Some churches have created bags or boxes which contain several elements that can be taken out and used at particular points in the service (e.g. linking toys to symbolise gathering together, a Bible story book, a credal triangle, play bread, pattern and chalice for Holy Communion). They are designed either for a parent to support their child through the liturgy in a tactile way, or for a leader to use with several children, perhaps near the front of the church or to one side (while in view of what's happening). This site explores further what might be included in a liturgy bag or box (but always adapt them to suit your context) <http://www.spiritualchild.co.uk/liturgyboxes.html>

Just get close

Sometimes all that is needed to feel included is getting close to the action. Invite children to gather round the altar or Communion table while it is being prepared so that they can see and hear what's going on.

A word of caution

Not all children and young people are the same. While some might relish action songs and coming forward to help prepare the table, others may not. Be respectful of them – invite their participation rather than insist on it.

The elephant in the room

The best way to participate in Holy Communion is to be included in receiving the bread and the wine. Some denominations are more open to welcoming children to communion than others, or have particular regulations which need to be followed. If you do not already admit children to communion, have a conversation with your church leadership about what is permissible, and whether the journey to admission could be started.

Jesus took bread, gave thanks to God, broke it and shared it with his disciples. 'Do this to remember me,' he said. Children and young people need to be included in Holy Communion so that they too can remember Jesus, know that through the Holy Spirit he is with us now, and be sent out, strengthened in their faith, to love and serve the Lord.

Using Bread & Wine

Each set of Roots Bread & Wine resources – two per issue – is themed to fit with either a season covered by a particular Roots issue (e.g. Advent and Christmas) or with a general or overarching theme of some of the weeks in an issue (e.g. parables, or kingdom of God). We provide one set for each theme or season – rather than one per week – to aid continuity and familiarity.

What is Bread & Wine?

It is words, prayers and texts that, together with the usual weekly content, provide themed resources for intergenerational or all-age Communion worship. It includes:

A gathering prayer – a themed prayer suitable for the beginning of an all-age Communion service.

An invitation to penitence – a seasonal or thematic sentence or two to help people prepare themselves for an act of penitence. It is an alternative to that provided in the weekly resources, which is likely to be specific to that week's theme.

A Kyrie confession – a simple form of confession with three brief phrases, each leading to a response: 'Lord/Christ, have mercy'. *

An all-age prayer of confession – a seasonal or thematic prayer suitable for an all-age Communion context. Again, it is an alternative to that provided in the weekly resources, which is likely to be specific to that week's theme. **

An assurance of forgiveness – also known, in some traditions, as an 'absolution'. **

Gospel acclamation – in some traditions an acclamation, often a brief sentence or phrase from Scripture, together with said or sung alleluias, is used to introduce the Gospel reading.

Introduction to the Peace – an introduction and call to share the Peace; often followed by: 'Peace be with you' or similar words.

Short Preface for a (Eucharistic) Thanksgiving prayer – brief words of thanks and praise, focused on the theme of the season or occasion, suitable for use in the first part of a Communion Thanksgiving prayer, or in any part of worship where they might be appropriate.

A post-Communion prayer – a themed prayer suitable for the end of an all-age Communion service.

Prayers of blessing – two prayers of blessing, both suitable for an all-age Communion service: one short and simple, especially in its language, and the other more formal but still suitable for an all-age context.

* designed to be Church of England compliant; see [WEB](#) for more details.

** Church of England and other Anglican provinces allow only authorised words to be used.

Bread & Wine

A treasure for you to explore



Sharing the gift of Holy Communion with families on a council estate.

Revd Canon Jack Noble (Fr Jack) is Rector of St Giles without Cripplegate, in the City of London. The parish is home to significant cultural venues (Barbican, Guildhall School of Music and Drama), some of the world's leading financial institutions, and many historic buildings – including St Giles' itself, one of the few medieval buildings to survive the Great Fire of London. In stark contrast, the parish is also home to a large council-owned estate. Around half the families on the estate are 'Old Cockney', born and bred in or near the City's Square Mile. The other half have migrated from many areas across the world. 'At the primary school, we find it's a wonderful, harmonious mix of children – all learning from each other, and it's a delight to see,' says Fr Jack. 'We do also have children whose families have not been in work for several generations. That brings its own challenges and opportunities.' Fr Jack is taking one such opportunity with the parish school, St Luke's CoFE School, Old Street. From autumn 2023, Fr Jack will preside at a monthly all-age Eucharist in the school hall.

Here Fr Jack explains why he is starting this service – and why Holy Communion is an essential part of it.

Meeting families where (and when) they are

Families from the estate simply don't visit the area where the church is located. They don't see that space as 'belonging to them'. So, we are going where they are. We'll be meeting in a typical 1960s school hall – complete with climbing bars up one side and a weak projector. To help us prepare the space we'll bring in a table, a decent altar cloth and candles. We'll meet at 4pm on the second Sunday of the month. This timing is important, as it works around family life. In some places around the country, a Sunday morning may not suit because children are busy with musical or sporting commitments. That isn't the case with children in our community, but 4pm is still best because families don't tend to be out and about on Sunday mornings. Meeting at 4pm also gives us the opportunity to share food together afterwards – enough to suffice as the evening meal. With many children receiving free school meals, this is an important way in which we can serve local families.

Children as elders

Years 5 and 6 in the primary school will be the elders. We're 'just the priests'. My prayer is that we'll start out with a handful of enthusiastic children and from there we will grow into a vibrant community – a proper, local estate church.

Why is Holy Communion so important to your time together?

Eucharist is the heart of the Church: it's where people, Scripture and God come together. Participating in Holy Communion helps people go beyond a nominal Christianity – it becomes *experiential*. I wouldn't say that families in the community are completely unchurched, but they can be tempted into thinking that they've 'ticked the box' by being baptized as an infant and attending a church school.

What we want them to discover through Holy Communion is that there is so much more. By becoming communicants, by further engagements through adolescence, they have the chance to meet with God; to become lifelong followers of Jesus. Even if they seem to fall away later, a space has been opened for God to work in their lives.

How will Holy Communion at the school differ from the one you hold in the church building?

We're going to start quite simply: with two hymns and a said service. It will be smooth, punchy (around 45 minutes long) but not abbreviated. We'll still have what we would have in the church building: in our case, that's vestments, candles, a procession and a talk. I was previously chaplain at a large secondary school, and I found that there is still space for dignified, reverential, traditional worship that is not only worthy of God, but also worthy of those who are coming to meet with God in Communion. I find that traditional worship can hold chaos beautifully.

How has your time as chaplain at a secondary school influenced your plans for all-age Communion?

I'm confident that Holy Communion has a real gift to give people, and I could see that at the secondary school.

Including everyone The secondary school is a church school where I worked with a community of all faiths and none. When I was there, around 500 children were regular communicants in their local churches, but that left around 700 other pupils. Those pupils were still fully included, even though they didn't physically take Communion. I would say 'Jesus is here. You are here with Jesus. This is an amazing time to be in the room with

Jesus.' During the time when Communion was administered, I would encourage those pupils to engage in 'spiritual Communion' – to talk to Jesus in their hearts. It was a joy to see them: eyes closed, brows furrowed, focused on these conversations in their hearts.

Being accessible At the secondary school, I tried to 'show my working' – explaining what was happening as I went along. All the way through the service I'd remind pupils that God was in the room. For example, during the reading I'd say: 'We're listening to the Bible now. What do you notice? What is God saying to you?'

Inviting – and responding to – questions I'd always invite questions at the end: I find that children often bring huge questions and doubts. It's so important to take those seriously. If I didn't have time to respond straightaway, I'd make sure to arrange a time to follow up.

Final thoughts?

This experience has influenced plans for the all-age Eucharist, but I am sure that God has many new lessons for us to learn together. For now, we will invite people and see what happens. Come along – there's a treasure here for you to explore.

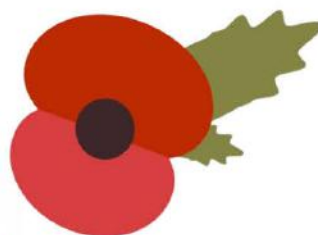
This article is the result of conversation between Tracy Somorjay, Roots Marketing Officer, and Fr Jack, August 2023.



Access all links by taking a free trial at rootsforchurches.com

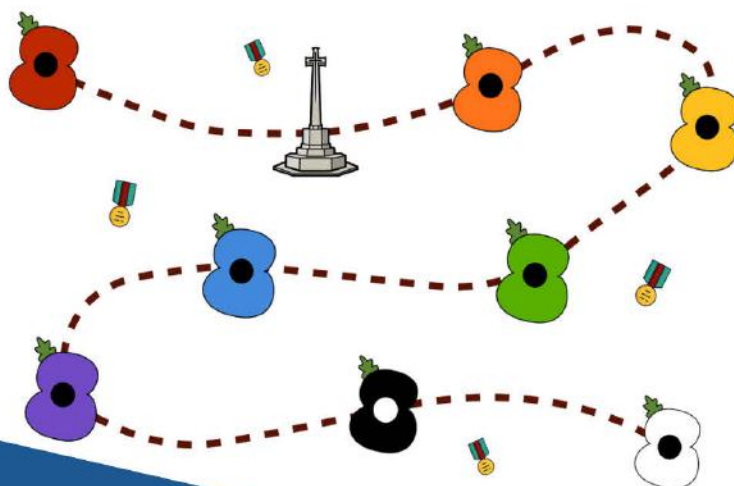
Roots
RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

POPPY TRAIL



Help local families engage with the act of remembrance, as they find out about different colours of poppy and reflect together on war and peace.

Available to buy at
rootsforchurches.com/poppytrail



Bread & Wine

Considering spiritual styles



Darren Philip, National Stewardship Consultant for the Church of Scotland, explores ways of incorporating word, emotion, symbol and action in an all-age Communion service.

People express their spirituality, experience God and make sense of the world around them in a variety of different ways. These can be understood as 'spiritual styles', and most people have a preference in one or two of these areas. There are four distinct ways that people tend to connect with God:

- **Word** – connecting with God through knowing about God.
'Word' people value spoken and written words, detail, accuracy and concreteness.
- **Emotion** – connecting with God through feeling God's presence.
'Emotion' people value the presence of others, e.g. in groups, dramas, dance, etc.
- **Symbol** – connecting with God through mystery, symbols and images.
'Symbol' people like to 'wonder' – at art, at nature, at pictures or objects.
- **Action** – connecting with God in practical ways.
'Action' people are often concerned with issues of justice and peace.

(developed by David Csinos, *Children's Ministry that Fits*, and drawing on work by Joyce Bellous)

Much 'traditional' worship is very word focused and there is a need to explore ways to create worship that engages with other styles and preferences, so that all those who are present are included and nurtured according to their dominant style, as well as given opportunities to explore different ways of experiencing God.

The sharing of Holy Communion naturally involves elements of each style – there are the words of the institution, the emotion of the shared experience, the symbols of the bread and wine, and the action of sharing the elements. The following suggestions give ideas on the varied ways that spiritual styles can be used to enrich a Communion service.

Greenbank Church, Edinburgh

We have three services on our quarterly Communion Sundays, none of which specifically included children. When we received a new minister, the pattern was revised to make the 9.30am service an intentionally family-friendly Communion, held in the round, in the church hall. This service celebrates the liveliness of our Christian community, without removing the beauty and mystery of the sacrament. Young people are encouraged to sit near the front with their families and there are rugs, to allow young children to crawl around or read books. People of all ages are involved in distributing the elements. The introduction of this service has led to a higher attendance of 70-90 people, from a wide age range, on Communion Sunday, and has not detracted from the attendance at the later, more contemplative and formal communion service. Families have been very positive on the experience of this family-friendly provision of Communion in our church.

Word

- Tell the story of the Last Supper
- Use participatory responses
- Locate people and places mentioned in their historical context, e.g. maps, timelines
- Use liturgical, scriptural texts or poems, e.g. Agnus Dei
- Say 'The Body/Blood of Christ' as elements are shared
- Offer the opportunity to write a response or prayer
- Choose hymns for the rhythm/rhyme of the words

Emotion

- Present the story as a drama
- Involve a choir or dance group
- Think about our feelings, or the feelings of those at the Last Supper
- Share a sign of peace
- Serve the elements to one another
- Use relational language about God: Father, Mother, friend, etc.
- Offer an opportunity for discussion or talking with one another
- Choose hymns that are participative, e.g. action songs

Symbol

- Set the table slowly and deliberately during the worship
- Perform the symbolic actions in the narrative, e.g. visibly break the bread and take the cup
- Include a time of silence
- Light a candle
- Display a relevant painting or artwork
- Use Godly Play or ask 'I wonder' questions... without giving an answer
- Offer the opportunity to respond creatively, e.g. draw a prayer
- Choose hymns that have poignant tunes or that are repetitive

Action

- Invite someone to bake the bread or prepare the elements
- Offer everyone the chance to distribute the elements
- Use Fair Trade wine and bread
- Link the liturgy to practical actions of social justice or care for creation (e.g. sharing through a food bank)
- Include church projects and charities in prayers
- Offer an idea for an action to do during the week, as a continuation of the worship
- Choose hymns that refer to God's and our action in the world

6

It is through our worship that we tell the story of our faith and reaffirm our belief. Therefore worship becomes not just the expression of our faith but also essential in the formation and growth of faith. Ritual, rite and liturgy are capable of both the nurturing and evangelising means of assisting people on the journey of faith.

(*Unfinished Business: Children and the Church*, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2000, p.47)

9

This article originally appeared in *Together at the Table* [WEB](#), reprinted here with kind permission of the Church of Scotland.

Access all links by taking a free trial at rootsforchurches.com

Roots
RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

Nativity trail



Invite your community to join in a fun and festive journey around your local area, church or school grounds

rootsforchurches.com/nativity



Bread & Wine

Celebrating Communion in Creation



Siggy Parratt-Halbert, Learning and Development Officer at the Methodist Church, discusses what we need to consider if we are holding a Communion service outdoors.

Communion outdoors

I suspect we've all heard about Forest Church by now, perhaps even tried it. (If you're new to Forest Church, please see resources list [WEB](#) for further information). But what happens when we want to celebrate Communion with that community? Do we have to move back inside? Well, no! But neither are we looking for an exact replica of what we do indoors.

Forest Church is never a copy of an indoor service outdoors. Instead, it aims to provide opportunities for believers and seekers alike to explore their spirituality and connect with God, through engagement with his creation – the biggest, most beautiful demonstration of God's nature. There is often a walk, perhaps with buggies, wheelchair users and dogs on leads. There are moments to stop, notice, listen, trace a pattern on a leaf or a stone, reflect. Nature can teach us just as much as a sermon of words, and many of Jesus' parables prompt us to reflect on the growth of plants, trees, and vines.

I am inspired by the writing of the 12th-century mystic, Hildegard [WEB](#), raising our gaze to the 'Viriditas', that is, the green power of the Divine that surrounds us. Prayer without speech, coloured by our engagement with the air we breathe, the birds we hear, the damp grass beneath our (bare) toes, can often say more than we can in words. Gathering outdoors to wonder, worship and connect in conversation can mean stilling ourselves and attending to God, an invitation to communion with Christ.

We'll have to grapple with the spontaneous: the wind, the rain, the mud (yes, it is not just for sunny days!), passers-by, noisy or inquisitive children, though you could even try including them – what an opportunity to share God with others yet to know him.

The art of letting go

Facilitating Forest Church requires the leader to relinquish control not only of the environment, but the worshippers too; it's their exploration of their experience of God, and individuals might depart a little from what the facilitator has planned. That requires courage and a letting go. The 'holy chaos' of traipsing a dozen people around a chilly park can unsettle those who like to plan and be in control, and especially around Communion, which can be formal and ritualised in an indoor context.

We'll have to grapple with the spontaneous: the wind, the rain, the mud (yes, it is not just for sunny days!), passers-by, noisy or inquisitive children, though you could even try including them – what an opportunity to share God with others yet to know him. And add to that dogs, lack of seating, no PA systems, tables or hymn books! It's 'church on the move', but perhaps that challenge is why we find it refreshing.

How might we make the most of sharing bread and wine together, while we are outside? What might Communion look and sound like, if we too decided to celebrate in the way Jesus might have done had he been in a garden somewhere? We are unlikely to be singing as we do in church, but the birds will be singing. We probably won't be saying 'call and response' prayers because we are less likely to be carrying sheaves of paper or books when worshipping outdoors. So how else might we pray together? Are words even necessary or can you pray in other ways?

Maybe, just maybe, we might birth a Forest Communion to go with Forest Church. How beautiful it could be, communing with God right in the middle of God's living word, creation itself. Why not give it a go – just like that first taste of broccoli in your childhood, you might just like it! (And a reminder that there are many more resources to help on the [WEB](#).)

Questions to consider

- Which parts of the liturgy does your denomination require you to keep, and with which parts could you be creative in your interpretation?
- Which parts might we reinvent to reflect the environment?
- Would we have a table or a picnic blanket?
- What would our prayerful preparation for approaching God's picnic blanket (rather than God's table) look like? Would we use a chalice still, or would a picnic beaker be more appropriate?
- Must the minister lead the words, or could others present speak (or not) from their own hearts?
- What if we incorporated Hildegard of Bingen's notion of the 'Greening Finger of God' [WEB](#) as we draw near?



expose/Shutterstock.com

Access all links by taking a free trial at rootsforchurches.com

Bread & Wine

Connecting with school, connecting with families

Fr Christopher Phillips SSC is vicar of St Mary's Church in Willesden, London. St Mary's CE Primary School is a short distance away; once a week, two classes come over to the church to celebrate communion.

We celebrate communion every day at St Mary's, so it is natural that we should celebrate it with our linked school, too. Our school service is the biggest service we hold each week, and I do find that nerve-racking – but I also absolutely love it. The children are naturally responsive and interactive; when I ask for volunteers, a sea of hands shoot up!

We use the same wording each time and I feel that this consistency is hugely important. I also introduce and explain things as I go along. As the children attend regularly, they build up familiarity with the words and phrases and deepen their understanding.

In our service all children get involved with responses and music, etc – but not every child takes communion; only those who have been admitted. For children who would like to be admitted, I run a couple of afterschool sessions where I can go into greater depth about the different parts of the service.

We then hold a special 'first communion' service at a weekend, and I have found this to be a wonderful way to connect with families. I invite families to join us on Sundays for a few weeks beforehand, so that they know what to expect. For us, this personal connection has been so important: it has given families a chance to get to know us and build relationships. From a small start, we've seen a steady rise in the number of families coming to Sunday services; our Sunday School has trebled in size, and we've just started a monthly youth group.



Access all links by taking a free trial at rootsforchurches.com

Bread & Wine

Holy Communion with toddlers



The Revd Dr Daniel Trott, Team Vicar at All Saints' Church, Putney, London, describes their weekly 'Toddler Eucharist'.

We have a small but loyal group of parents and carers who bring their babies and toddlers to our Toddler Eucharist on Thursday mornings, which is followed by a playgroup. There can be three children or a dozen, varying in age from a few weeks to four years old. I see the service as serving two purposes: (1) it is a chance for parents/carers to take part in a service without worrying at all about their child's behaviour, and (2) it is a way of initiating children into worship.

The setting is 'child-sized'. I use a conductor's box for the altar, on which goes a white cloth and two candlesticks, and I sit cross-legged on a meditation bench in my cassock-alb and stole (see photo). The parents/carers and children sit on two large mats in front. The table bearing the elements (bread and wine) is within reach at my right.

I incorporate material from the Diddy Disciples worship and storytelling resource¹ and other sources suitable for very young children (e.g. those using actions and songs) into a service that fulfils all the liturgical requirements of the Anglican 'A Service of the Word with Holy Communion'. The service needs to contain more than words if it is going to engage small children, and so I try to use actions and singing as much as possible. (You could use the 'Share the story' and other ideas from the Roots Under 5s material – see [WEB](#)).

We begin by invoking the Trinity and using the standard greeting 'The Lord be with you'. We then share our names and sing a welcome song. After that, I introduce the prayers of penitence, lead a Kyrie confession, and give absolution. I lead the collect.

We begin the Liturgy of the Word by singing a 'gathering song' (again, we use one from Diddy Disciples but you could use suggestions from the Roots Under 5s material – see [WEB](#)). Then I read the Gospel or another Bible reading (you could follow the lectionary here and use 'Share the story' from the Roots Under 5s material – see [WEB](#)), using plenty of singing and actions. This is followed by prayers of intercession.

We share the peace, and I ask how many people want to receive Communion. I set up the table and pray Additional Eucharistic Prayer One (from Common Worship, which has been written to be used when children are present), singing the preface with sung 'Holy, Holy, Holy' responses. We say the Lord's Prayer, I break the bread, and then we receive Communion. We then sing a prayer of thanksgiving to the tune of 'Frère Jacques'. Notices are given and 'Happy Birthday' may be sung.

I give a blessing and say the dismissal, and children blow the candles out before rushing to the toy cupboard. I don't claim that the service is perfect, but it's been wonderful to see small children engaging in sacramental worship. If small children can experience the 'atmosphere' of worship then that's a good foundation on which to build other ways of engaging as they grow up.

Tips for starting your own Toddler Communion

- Engage all the senses and use actions and singing, drawing on age-appropriate resources
- Your denomination's rubrics (instructions for liturgy) probably have more flexibility in them than you've realised, so work out a way of including what's necessary while adapting it appropriately.
- Young children don't need to 'understand' everything that is said or done – it is more important for them to experience being part of worship, an experience that can be built on as they grow up and receive age-appropriate teaching.

¹ See diddydisciples.org

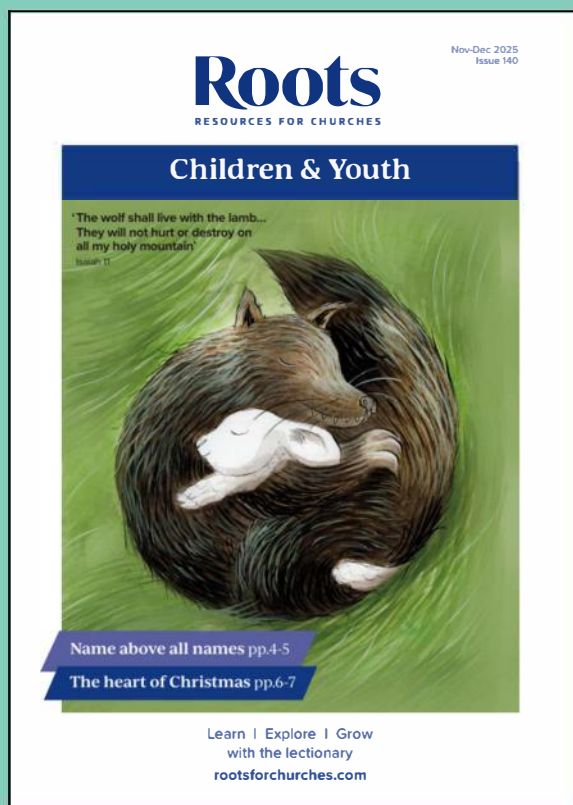
Roots Children & Youth

RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

Our weekly Children & Youth materials explore Bible readings from the Revised Common Lectionary.

Over the next pages you'll find one week's resources for:

- Children (roughly primary age)
- Youth (11+)
- Under 5s



An annual subscription to Children & Youth resources includes:

- freshly-written material for 52 weeks
- seasonal and themed resources
- access to our online Resources Bank of 24 years' worth of material!

We offer flexible subscription packages:

- for individuals or for different-sized teams
- digital-only, or add magazines
- subscribe to Children & Youth, Worship Together, or both!

Find out more:

rootsforchurches.com/subscriptions



Access all downloads, images and links on the following pages with a four-week free trial
rootsforchurches.com/freetrial

King of the turning world

The writer of this Psalm compares the chaos of the world to the peace of God, telling the people that they do not need to be afraid.

When terrible, terrifying events take place, we will not be afraid. When earthquakes make mountains tremble and the landscape shifts in front of us, we will not be afraid. When tsunamis * arise in the oceans and the water churns and roars, we will not be afraid. 'Why?' I hear you say. We will not be afraid because God is both our source of strength and our place of shelter.

God is in the holy city *, a place safe from all the terrors and conflicts of the world we live in. Although nations roar against each other, like the waters of a wild sea, and kingdoms come crashing down, God speaks and troubles melt like candle wax. The Lord God is our safe place, our shelter.

Come and see what the Lord has done! God puts an end to wars, snapping the bows of archers, splintering spears and setting shields on fire. In the quiet after wars have ended, God speaks, saying, 'Be still and know that I am God. I am lifted high by the nations *; I am high above the earth.' This is the God who is with us; this is the one who is our place of shelter.

See session outline on p.28

Stop and share

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

- * Tsunamis are big waves that can be caused by earthquakes under the sea.
- * In the Bible, 'holy city' usually refers to Jerusalem, but it may also refer to any place God lives, God's kingdom, heaven, our hearts.
- * This means people from all over the world will know that God is king.



Children

King of the turning world

Psalm 46 WEB Bible notes

The psalmist proclaims God as our refuge, strength and help in times of trouble – therefore, we should not fear, even when the world around us is in turmoil.

Prepare and reflect

This week marks the Feast of Christ the King. The psalmist reflects on God as a constant king in a tumultuous world: when the world seems to be falling apart, God provides strength and stillness.

'Be still...' (v.10) can also be translated as 'let go...'. As we enter a busy time of year, what things do we need to let go of in order to focus on Jesus?

Sometimes the world can feel overwhelming, whether as a result of global events or daily life. Our God, who is bigger than the chaos, invites us all to pause and find a quiet shelter in his presence.

Online at rootsforchurches.com

Activity sheets, templates, links and images as needed.

Thrive: a resource to encourage family faith at home.

See **Songs** and **Prayers** on p30.



Gather

10 mins

Still point in the turning world

WES

You will need: long exposure photographs WEB.

- Long exposure photography captures movement while the camera stays still. Today's Bible reading describes something similar: God stays still in a moving world. Spend a minute quietly looking at the photos. Then discuss: What do they make you think about/feel? What happens when you stop still in a moving world?

Lord God,
thank you for being with us today.
Our world turns so fast,
sometimes we can't keep up,
and things seem so frightening.
Help us to realise that, whatever happens,
you, our God, are in control.
Amen.

Share the Word

10 mins

Read the story on p.26 and explore the passage together.

A shelter from chaos

E

You will need: shakers, percussion instruments or 'noise makers', floaty scarves or streamers.

- Wave scarves and use instruments or stamping and clapping to create the feeling of a big storm. When the leader gives a sign, everyone should fall still. Read the Psalm in the quiet.

Explore & respond

30 mins

Calm jars

ES

Make a reminder to focus on God

You will need: plastic bottles/glass jars, warm water, eco-friendly glitter, food colouring, clear PVA glue/glitter glue, hot glue gun.

- Squeeze PVA/glitter glue in the empty jar (the more glue, the slower the glitter will move) then top up with warm water, leaving a few centimetres free at the top.
- Add glitter and a few drops of food colouring, until you are happy with how it looks.
- Replace the lid firmly, and shake to mix the glitter, glue and water together. Once satisfied, seal the lid with a hot glue gun to prevent leaks.
- Say: When the world feels like it's all shaken up, God will be our place of calm.

Quoits

ES

Throwing a busy world towards the stationary cross, at the centre

You will need: set of quoits and pegs.

- Divide children into two teams, and take it in turns to throw quoits, trying to land them over the scoring pegs.
- The winning team is either the first to reach a certain number of points, or the highest scorers after a certain number of rounds. Throwing distance can be adjusted to make the game easier or harder.
- Notice together the cross-shape at the centre of pegs. Ask: When life is busy, can we take time to be still and spend time talking to God/Christ the King?

Or **Pinwheel tree ornament** WEB



Quoits activity.

Talk together and talk to God

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

- Think of a time when you felt scared. What made you feel safe again?
- What feels 'shaken up' or scary in our lives, or in the world, at the moment?
- How can we take a 'pause' this week to talk to God about our worries? Can you catch God's peace?

King of all nations

W E S

Pray for God to be exalted in all the earth

You will need: big world map or globe.

- As a group, generate a list of countries.
- Can the children find the country on the map? (What do they know about the country? Do they know what continent it's in? Do they know what language is spoken there? Can they think of a food from that country?)
- Pray for each country, and that God will be exalted in each nation.

Go with God

10 mins

Reflect on what our theme means for everyday faith.

- Ask the children to sit or lie comfortably, and spend a minute or two practising being still.
- Invite everyone to close their eyes or to focus on a point such as a picture or cross. They should think about some of the things that make their brain feel 'busy', and then imagine handing them over to God.
- Spend a short time being quiet. Remind the children that in a busy, turning world, God can be our shelter – a place of safety and stillness.

As we leave this place, we remember that the Lord Almighty is with us:

praise be to God!

The God of Jacob is our fortress:

praise be to God!

Amen.

Go with God challenge



S A

Can you find time to be quiet and focus on God this week?

Under 5s

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

Play ideas: sensory play using different materials; water, rocks, sand, etc.

Sing to the tune: *Did you ev'r see a lassie?*

Here we are together, together, together.

Here we are together to learn from the King.

Share the story

Invite the children to act out some simple actions to the words in bold as you tell the story.

This is a song that was written to praise God.

It uses picture language to describe what God is like.

It says, 'God **keeps us safe** and gives us **strength**.

Even if the **whole world fell apart**,
and the **mountains fell into the sea**,
we will **not be afraid**.

Even when the **oceans roar**

and even if the **mountains shook**, we will **not be afraid**.

God rules over the whole world.

He **fills** the world with his blessings.

He **ends wars between people** and says,

"**Be still** and know that I am God."

Circle time

Gather the children together in a circle and talk about what it means to feel safe with God. Talk about God being our shelter and make a safe space together with blankets, cushions, large boxes and/or play tents to reflect this.

Make crowns

Provide card crowns and a selection of decorative materials and invite the children to design and decorate their own crowns to wear. You can buy basic crown shapes online or create your own templates on long strips of card.

Sing praise

Sing some songs of praise to celebrate Jesus the King. These may be songs that the children already know or new ones, such as 'King of Me' (Rend Collective), or perhaps you could work together to create your own simple praise rhyme together.

Sing to the tune: *The Grand Old Duke of York*

Oh, Jesus is the King
and he will come again,
to rule over everything,
Jesus is our King!



Songs and Prayers

Sing

[WEB](#) Music links



0-5s

He is the King of Kings, Bible Time

5-11

As the Sun Rises from Same Boat Music, free to download with your Roots subscription.

Upside Down, Virtual Sunday School

Jesus is the best king, Maynards Groovy

Bible Tunes

King of kings and Lord of lords, glory (CJP 148)

12+

King of Kings, Brooke Ligertwood, *EIGHT*

Hymn to Christ the King, Sarah Hart

Pray

[WEB](#) Welsh translations



A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Lord Jesus, thank you that,
however strange our world may seem,
we know we can trust you
to turn us in the right direction.
Thank you, Lord.

Amen.

A prayer for forgiveness

Sit quietly and watch (or imagine) a globe spinning.

As it comes to rest, say:

Forgive me Lord, for being all in a spin.

Help me to slow down and rest in your loving presence.

Amen.

A prayer for others

Response after each sentence: Bless them, Lord.

Lord, we pray for people who feel
they have no control over their lives:
for people caught up in war,
in natural disasters,
in poverty,
in illness.

Lord, bless them all with your heavenly touch.

Amen.

Youth

King of the turning world

Psalm 46 [WEB](#) Bible notes

The psalmist proclaims God as our refuge, strength and help in times of trouble – therefore, we should not fear, even when the world around us is in turmoil.

Prepare and reflect



Thought to be written by the Sons of Korah [WEB](#), Psalm 46 is filled with juxtapositions on how changing the world can be in contrast with how still and constant God is.

When have you noticed God's loving presence during life changes and turning points?

With major turning points in a young person's life, they can feel increasing pressure. In this ever-changing world, Psalm 46 can be a blessing but also a challenge to young people. How can they find moments to 'Be still' in an ever-turning world? How can they keep Christ the King as the focus?

Online at rootsforchurches.com

Check-in: a weekly Biblical reflection on youth and contemporary culture.

Thrive: a resource to encourage family faith at home.

Links, templates, images, and tracks.



Gather



10 mins

Spinning world

E S

You will need: internet access, screen and video link [WEB](#).

- Invite the young people to gather around the screen and play the 'Hypnotic spiral' video.
Ask everyone to be still and focus on the middle of the spiral for the entire video, and then to focus on the head that is shown at the end of the video. For most people the head will then appear to shrink!
- Encourage the young people to reflect on how, by focusing on the things in this world too much, our perception can be altered. What would it look like then to have a life with Jesus at the centre?

Share the Word



10 mins

RCL Christ the King Year C: Jeremiah 23:1-6;

Psalm 46; Colossians 1:11-20; Luke 23:33-43



First impressions WEB Questions on the theme

- What things are 'spinning' for you at the moment?
- How can you put King Jesus in the centre of these things?
- Where would you like the presence of Jesus to be felt right now? Pause to pray for this situation.

Share the Selah

WES

You will need: copies of the passage, access to the internet/tablet/phone.

- Read the passage aloud and, as you do, pause at any imagery linked to our earth, e.g. waters foam, earth melts, mountains shake.
- At each pause, or 'Selah', invite the young people to search for those images using their devices. As they do, encourage everyone to save these still images to help them build up an image of how vast and deep God's power is.

Explore & respond 30 mins

Don't get dizzy!

Keeping our focus on Christ

You will need: video clips WEB and the means to show them.

- Watch the video on basic ballerina training and challenge the young people to try and spin as the ballerina does while 'spotting'.
- How long do they think it would take to make this movement naturally? In the same way that athletes and ballerinas can stop themselves from becoming dizzy while spinning, can we prevent ourselves from being distracted and dizzy in today's culture? How can we keep focused on Jesus every day, so that we no longer need to think about doing it, we just do!
- Play/sing 'Jesus be the centre', Vineyard Worship, ft. Michael Frye & Kathryn Scott.

Or **God is our refuge** WEB

Out of this world

WA

Rely on God in a changing climate

You will need: the means to play the video WEB.

- Scientists in 2024 discovered that the earth is in fact slowing down and spinning at a slower rate. What parallels can the young people draw from Psalm 46:2 '...though the earth should change', and the current changes on earth due to climate change? Discuss: In what ways do the young people think we could help prevent the slowing down of the earth and climate change?
- Talk together about ways in which the church or community could become more environmentally friendly to prevent such changes. Can they lead a call to action to increase recycling? Decrease waste? Or start a swap shop? While doing so, encourage them to trust that God, despite the changes in the world, is still in control of all.

Around the world

SA

Pray for the nations

You will need: images of the countries, coloured pens, large paper. See WEB for links to information about global issues.

- Display images of the seven continents of the Earth around the room in a circle. Next to each image, place a flipchart or large sheet of paper and the pens.
- Invite the young people to select a continent to pray for, being mindful of any current political or cultural topics. As they pray, ask them to write or draw their prayers onto the paper.
- Encourage everyone to move around the circle until they have each prayed for all seven continents.
- Gather back together and read out the prayers. As you close, invite the group to say:

Please God, be their refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble. **Amen.**

- Sing/play 'How Great is our God', Chris Tomlin, during this activity.

Go with God 10 mins

Ask the group to sit in a circle with their backs facing each other, and their bodies facing outwards. Providing paper and pencils, invite everyone to draw their own view of the room.

- Once completed, ask the young people to turn back into the circle and display their pictures. Notice how each picture is different, as they all saw the room slightly differently; but, despite this, Jesus sees the whole picture.
- Reflect together on how although we all see and react in the world differently, Jesus is King above all. Finish by singing/listening to 'King of Kings', Hillsong Worship.

Go with God challenge



SA

Take five minutes at the beginning and end of every day to 'be still' and feel God's presence.

Psalm 46

King of the turning world

In a world just as tumultuous as in Biblical times, God still offers refuge – for we humans, and for the whole of creation too. Yet what does refuge look like? Is it what we expect? Is it where we expect? Just know it is there, with the King of the turning world.

Read this week's passage:



Play the board game 'Game of Life.' At every obstacle and choice, share thoughts and questions about how Jesus fits into the decisions we may be making.



Build a den at home. As you're making it, talk together about the things that make you feel 'safe'. (Maybe a place, a feeling, or a person.) How does God help us feel safe? Can you share about a time that God has helped you feel safe?



Experiment with long exposure photography or light painting photography, for example, spelling out words or shapes using glow sticks.

Find more free Roots resources to reflect on this week's theme:



Living Scripture

'Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.' Psalm 46:10

A quick scan of news headlines and we can feel anxious – wars and conflict rage around the world. Where can we find safety? Verses 1-2 say 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change.'

How do we experience this refuge the psalmist found? Choosing not to fear but instead trust God is hard, especially when we are watching scenes of destruction on the news. Where is the God of peace?

Fear narrows our focus and makes us think more personally, potentially leading to biased decision-making and impulsive actions. Fear triggers our brain's survival mechanisms which prioritise immediate self-protection over broader perspectives or long-term consequences.

The psalm teaches us that God is with us and that God isn't just with us, he's the global God, interested in blessing all the nations and creation. That might not feel quite as comforting, but God's broader perspective, God's non-anxious presence with each of us, can give us the wisdom and peace we long for. When we find God, our shelter, we can zoom out and feel God's heart for the whole earth and acknowledge concerns of others. Where can you see God at work in the nations?

First impressions

- What things are 'spinning' for you at the moment?
- How can you put King Jesus in the centre of these things?
- Where would you like the presence of Jesus to be felt right now? Pause to pray for this situation.



Pray

Lord, help us to carry in our thoughts all those who need refuge and safety from threat: people fleeing war; ancient woodland destroyed for the latest road; fish dying in polluted rivers; families trapped in poor housing. Sometimes all we can do is hold them in our hearts. Amen.



Take some photos of things which are small in a way that makes them look massive. Can you think of stresses/worries in your life which you sometimes blow out of proportion?

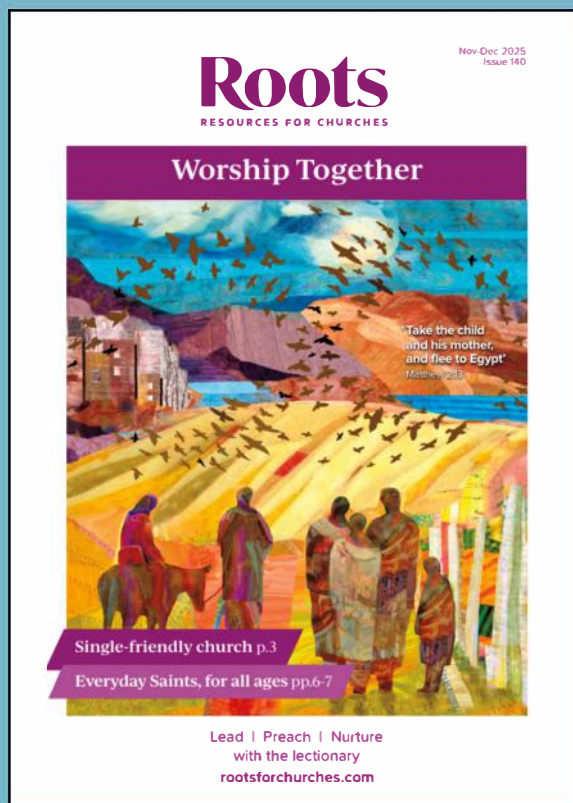
Take time to pray and remember that God is bigger than any of our problems.

Roots Worship Together

RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

Our weekly Worship Together materials explore Bible readings from the Revised Common Lectionary.

Over the next pages you'll find one week's resources that you can use with older teenagers, college students and in intergenerational settings.



An annual subscription to Worship Together resources includes:

- freshly-written material for 52 weeks
- seasonal and themed resources
- Bread & Wine Communion resources
- access to our online Resources Bank of 24 years' worth of material!

We offer flexible subscription packages:

- for individuals or for different-sized teams
- digital-only, or add magazines
- subscribe to Worship Together, Children & Youth, or both!

Find out more:

rootsforchurches.com/subscriptions



Access all downloads, images and links on the following pages with a four-week free trial
rootsforchurches.com/freetrial

King of the turning world

Psalm 46

The psalmist proclaims God as our refuge, strength and help in times of trouble – therefore, we should not fear, even when the world around us is in turmoil.

In a world just as tumultuous as in Biblical times, God still offers refuge – for humans and the whole of creation too. Yet what does refuge look like? Is it what we expect? Is it *where* we expect? On the Feast of Christ the King, we are reassured that Jesus is the king of this turning world.

Bible notes

RCL Christ the King Year C

Jeremiah 23:1-6

This reading from Jeremiah shows what type of king Jesus is not and promises the people that a good ruler will come. The image of 'shepherds' for rulers connects back to the story of David the 'shepherd king' and the description of the Lord as the Good Shepherd of Psalm 23 as well as Jesus' teaching in John 10. Jesus is not the type of shepherd who scatters the sheep and neglects them, stopping them being fruitful and multiplying. Instead, he gathers the people together by dealing wisely and being just, basing his righteousness in a shared vision of God. This type of leadership is capable of uniting the long-divided nations of Israel and Judah and bringing home those who are exiled. The bad ruler divides people to gain power and prestige. The good ruler unites them by showing justice to all.

Psalm 46

The psalms are sometimes described as 'the hymnbook of the Second Temple'. When this Temple was being built, the exiles who had returned to rebuild lived in constant fear of attack and conquest, so it is hardly surprising that many of the psalms call on God as defender. Psalm 46 confidently proclaims God as a refuge and strength and calls on people not to be afraid. Instead, they are to consult their knowledge of history. How many wars have ended? How many empires have fallen? Still God remains.

The psalmist reminds us that God is king, not just of his own people but of all the nations. Indeed, 'I am exalted in the earth'

(v.10) reminds us that he is king of the planet and the environment too. Our reaction to the chaos around us should not be fear or a desperate attempt to put things right in our own strength. Instead, we should be still and know the presence and reality of God. The word 'Selah' that ends the psalm could be a note for musicians playing an accompaniment or it could be a note to pause and keep a time of silence to reflect on what has been said about God. Here it could be an invitation to do what has just been commanded 'Be still, and know...'

Colossians 1:11-20

In Colossians, Paul and Timothy are writing to a group of Christians they have not met but have heard about from their fellow missionary, Epaphras. Paul is in prison, suffering unjustly in a cruel world. He is concerned that, knowing this, the Colossians will either doubt God's ability to save his people or believe preachers who belittle the fullness of Christ. Jesus was not just a good man who died cruelly. He is what we can see of the invisible God. All things were made by him and hold together in him. Through his death he has forgiven us and bought us out of slavery to whatever held us and made us citizens of Christ's kingdom. Scholars refer to this as the 'cosmic Christ'. Paul suggests that all creation is Jesus-shaped, made through him and finding its coherence and purpose in him. This is mind-blowing teaching! Some go as far as to say that the reason that even stars die, as well as animals and plants and us, and their elements become another thing and live again is because Jesus died and was raised and lives. On a less universal level, it means that we can find Christlikeness in all created things.

Luke 23:33-43

In Luke's account of the crucifixion, Jesus remains in control despite the pain and brutality of his execution. In contrast with Jeremiah's bad shepherds, he is uniting people, forgiving them and reconciling them to God even as he dies on the cross. The charge above him, 'This is the King of the Jews', and the mocking voices contrast the tortured, dying man with their idea of what a king or God's chosen saviour, the Messiah, should be. For them, kingship and messiahship involve, most of all, the power to save yourself from harm. The Gospel invites us to wonder at what it means to have a king who chooses *not* to save himself in order that others might be saved. What does it mean to have a king whose throne is a cross?

Hymns & songs

Songs in italics are suitable for all ages.

A mighty fortress is our God

(Baloche/Shust)

A refuge for the poor

Be still and know that I am God

Be still, there is a healer

Dear Lord and Father of mankind

Fierce was the wild billow

Glorious things of thee are spoken

I have a shelter in the storm

I love you, Lord, but I want to love you more

I will wait on you Lord.

If there were not a wall

Immortal love, for ever full

In the arms of the Father

In the silent, stillness, listen

In this stillness I will worship

I've filled my days with details

Jesu, priceless treasure

Let us go in your peace

Nothing but grace, my only plea

O God of Bethel, by whose hand

Online at rootsforchurches.com**Thought for the week** – read out in place of a sermon**In Touch** – linking readings to the week's news**Topical intercessions** on current issues**Hymns and songs** – additional resources and links**Welsh prayers and hymn suggestions**

Sermon ideas

● Is 'Be still, and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10) an adequate response to unequal and unjust wars? The following quotations may help guide your answer – 'your anger does not produce God's righteousness' (James 1:20) and 'Resentment is like drinking poison and hoping it will kill your enemies' (Nelson Mandela)¹. It can be very hard to know what is true and what is not and to discern within ourselves between what is righteous anger and what is a desire for revenge. What are some tools for doing that?

● The Feast of Christ the King was introduced into the liturgical calendar by Pope Pius XI in 1925. The pope saw how divided the Christian world had become after the First World War. National pride was making one Christian see another as 'the enemy' just because of where they happened to be born. To counter this, the pope wanted to stress that all Christians belong to the kingdom of Christ, are compatriots and belong together. The feast was strengthened by being moved to the last Sunday of the Church year when the calendar was reorganised in 1969. Jesus Christ is shown as the beginning and end of all things, the Alpha and Omega (Revelation 22:13). Imagine what the world would look like if we chose rulers who embodied Christlikeness. Does it make a difference that Christ is king rather than president or prime minister?

● Psalm 46:10 tells us that God is exalted among nations, and that he is exalted on the earth too. This verse is clear in telling us not only about God's focus on every nationality, but his focus on every kind of being. How are we looking after other people who are also made by God? And how are we looking after other beings made by God? All beings – animal and non-animal – need the refuge God offers. Who are we to deny God's order of things? How can we care for all of creation?

● Today we are standing at the end of the Christian year, while standing on the cusp of a new one. Liturgically, we are asked to consider our prejudices and misplaced priorities, and to look instead for similarity and equality with others under the unifying of Christ the King. Our ancestors envisioned the year as a wheel or circle. The centre of a wheel is a 'hub'; the centre of a circle is called the 'origin'. Christ refers to himself as origin, using the word 'Alpha'. He invites us to make him our centre. So at this still point between the ebb of the old year and the flow of the new one, can we take some time to consider what that might mean for us?

Prayers

A prayer of approach

Lord God Almighty,
you are our refuge, our shelter and our strength.
You forgive our sins and turn the world's darkness
to the light of your kingdom.
We gather to worship you now.

Amen.

A prayer of adoration

We believe you are our God, who cares for the world
on which we walk and live and breathe.
You hold humanity in your hands and love and care
for each one of us beyond measure.
Before you we stand in awe and amazement and bewilderment.
You are the Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth,
of all that we can see and hear and feel and sense.
You are the giver of Jesus Christ your only Son,
who gave his life for us and who rose and lives within us.
You are the Holy Spirit, who breathes life and meaning
and purpose into our very beings.
To you Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be all praise this day, and forever more.

Amen.

A prayer of confession

Almighty God, with regret and sorrow we confess our failings,
our shortcomings and our doubts.
We need your forgiveness, your compassion, your reassurance.
We seek to do better, to turn around and face you
and the needs of those around us.
Lord, hear our prayer.

Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

The Lord our God hears our words, spoken and unspoken.
The Lord our God knows us inside out.
The Lord our God forgives us, redeems and renews us,
lifts our burdens and sends us on our way.

Amen.

A prayer of praise

O God, with praise and thanksgiving we offer you our prayers.
You bring us together, bind us together, hold us together,
in you we put our trust.
We give thanks for your constancy in our lives.
We give thanks that in a world of turmoil and uncertainty,
you are our firm centre, the stability we need,
the peace in the midst of terror, the love that overcomes all hate,
the king who can never be overthrown.
We give thanks that in all that you have given us,
there is purpose, joy, hope and love beyond our comprehension.
Praise and thanks to you God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
king of our turning world.

Amen.

¹ Quoted in Wells, S. 2020. *Love Mercy: The Twelve Steps of Forgiveness*. Norwich: Canterbury Press. Page 23.

Planning Communion?

See our **Bread & Wine** resources on pages 4-5.



Gather

Introduction to worship

Use the activity and prayers to gather the group and introduce the theme.

Places of refuge

You will need: images of places of refuge and safety, both human and non-human, e.g. a garden shed, someone under a duvet, a cabin in the woods, a dormouse nest, a bird nesting box, etc.

- Explain that today we are thinking about God as our refuge in our constantly turning world.
- Show the images and ask people to shout out what they think they are (some will be very obvious, others less so). Then ask people to think of their own private safe space, a bolthole they can escape to when they are unhappy or just need to take some time out. Ask people to share their safe space with the people around them. Are there any similarities between them? What helps to make those spaces feel safe?

Call to worship

Come and enter the refuge
of God's presence.
Breathe out a long, slow breath of relief.
Come and enter into the still centre God offers us
in the midst of a turning world.

A gathering prayer

Gently whispering God,
as we gather together today,
silence our loud and churning thoughts,
help us to let go of distractions
so we may sit here peacefully with you,
our Lord God and king.

Amen.

Share the Word

Psalm 46

Use the script **WEB** to present a short play about finding refuge in a time of busyness.

Luke 23:33-43

Explain that it may seem odd to be hearing a reading about Jesus' crucifixion on the cusp of Advent. But tell people that this reading has been included today because it tells us something about what kind of king Jesus is.

Ask people for some ideas of what kings are like and how they are treated by others (e.g. they are powerful, they are treated with respect, everything done for them). Ask people to listen carefully as the Gospel is read – what does it tell us about what kind of king Jesus is? Does he act as you would expect? What is different about Jesus the king? Invite people to feed back on these questions after the reading.



tichr/istockphoto.com

First impressions **WEB** Questions on the theme

- What things are 'spinning' for you at the moment?
- How can you put King Jesus in the centre of these things?
- Where would you like the presence of Jesus to be felt right now? Pause to pray for this situation.

Online at rootsforchurches.com

First impressions image with questions

Children's activity sheet and colouring sheet (also in Welsh)

Resources for under 5s

Thrive – a resource for discipleship at home

Small group study on the week's reading(s)



Explore & respond

A simple worship activity

ES

A circle reflection

You will need: play sand or large hoops or flipchart paper and pens.

- This activity works well outdoors, and indoors if you have plenty of space. If you are doing it outdoors, encourage people to take some sand and draw the outline of a circle around themselves. Indoors, they could use a hoop or draw a circle on flipchart paper.
- Invite people to take some time to stand inside the circle in total stillness and silence. Encourage them to ponder on the experience of being held in safety while the world goes on outside the circle's edge, and to give thanks to God for his care.

'I am exalted in the earth'

WE

Reflect on God's creation

You will need: large poster paper, pens.

- Watch a timelapse of the night sky [WEB](#) that shows the stars and the turning of the earth on its axis. Or ask people to share an 'awesome' experience of the vastness and wonder of God's creation.
- Discuss together: How does this make you feel? Do you still feel as if the world belongs to humans alone, or does this video make you feel differently? Why/not? Does it evoke the majesty of the king we serve? Why/not?

Places of refuge

SA

Create a prayer space

- Work together as a whole group or in small groups to plan and/or make a calm prayer space in your building. There are many ways of doing this: it could be as simple as having a board with some images of situations to pray for. Or you could create a prayer 'den' that people can enter into to pray, using fabric and soft lighting. For inspiration, see [WEB](#).
- Anything goes, but the aim of the space is to create a 'still point' in a turning world where people can bring their concerns to God the king of a turning world.

Quoit prayers

ES

An active way to pray for the world

You will need: sets of quoits, stickers to write on, pens.

- The poet TS Eliot quoted an ancient Carthusian motto when he said, 'The cross of Christ is still in the turning world'. Invite people to take a set of quoits (you may need more than one) and to write prayers for our hurting world on the stickers and to stick them on the quoits hoops. Then ask people to try and cast the quoits onto the pegs.

A prayer for all ages together

Lord God, in a turning world (*turn in a circle*)
you are our refuge. (*make a 'house' shape above your head*)
In a noisy world, (*waggle hands over ears*)
you are our peace. (*place hands over heart*)
In a scary world, (*make frightened face*)
you are with us. (*wrap arms around yourself*)
Thank you, God, (*raise arms upwards*)
our king. (*place imaginary crown on head*)

Amen.

Go with God

A

Consider together what you have explored and how you will live your faith this week.

- If you haven't already made a prayer space, plan together to make that happen. If you did make a prayer space, how can you promote it to others as a place of refuge in a turning world?

A sending out prayer

As we leave this place,
help us to carry in our thoughts all who need refuge
and safety from threat,
including those fleeing war and dangerous situations.
Let us pray for those suffering
because of damaged environments,
and help us to be mindful of how our actions impact others.
Thank you for being our place of refuge,
our king of a turning world.

Amen.

Go with God

A

Can you make a prayer space at home that would be a place of refuge, even if it's a particular chair or corner of a room?

Hello, my name is

Name above all names


child is
BORN FOR US,
he is named
Wonderful
Counsellor,
MIGHTY GOD,
Everlasting Father,
PRINCE OF PEACE.
ISAIAH 9:6

Philippa Dand explores how we can get to know more about Jesus through the names given in our Isaiah Advent reading. This outline could be used in a December family celebration, an all-age service, or during afterschool club.

Somewhere to start

Names are very important to us. Invite people to share any special stories about their name. Ask the children: Does your name have a special meaning? Were you named after someone? Was there another reason you were given that name? For parents, how did they choose your child's name?



Salman Arif Farooqi/Shutterstock.com

God is called by many different names in the Bible, and those names often tell us something special about who God is, or what God will do.

Share the Word

Isaiah 9:2-7 [WEB](#)

Switched on

You will need: a torch; a large outline of a child with a question mark on them, drawn on flipchart paper or similar; name stickers/labels with the names from the passage (v.6): Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- Make the room as dark as possible. Ahead of time, invite a child to stick the name stickers onto the picture during the reading of Isaiah 9:6.
- Say: God's people feel like they are walking in darkness – they feel lost and can't see a way forward. The prophet Isaiah brings them good news (switch a torch on, and point it to the picture). He tells the people that someone very special is coming, and this person will bring joy, peace and justice. This news feels like a light going on for God's people!
- Read Isaiah 9:2-7.

Explore & respond

Christmas tree decoration

Putting God's name at the centre of our Christmas celebrations

You will need: coloured paper, bauble template [WEB](#) (or pre-cut circles), decorative materials, scissors, glue, ribbon, printouts of Christmas song lyrics (template on [WEB](#)) and highlighters; (optional) Christmas tree.

- Choose a Christmas song from the selection on the template to play or sing. Look together through the printed lyrics and ask the group: How many names for God can you find in the Christmas songs we sing? You may want to ask children to highlight the names, or do this ahead of time for younger children. Explain any names that are unfamiliar.
- Hand out bauble shapes/circles and help the children to cut out a name for God from the lyrics and stick it onto their bauble shape, (or artistically write it on), then decorate it and attach a ribbon. Add all the completed baubles to a Christmas tree or display to remind the children who we worship at Christmas.

Conversation point: How many names can you find for God? What Christmas carols do you know/have you sung this year? Can you think of any names of God in those?

Name Bingo

Recognising some of the names we use for God

You will need: Bingo cards [WEB](#), calling cards [WEB](#), counters/pencils.

- Choose someone to be the caller. Explain the rules: When the caller says/shows a name that is on your card, cover it with a counter.
- The winner is the person who covers a full line of names on their card first.

Conversation point: Have you heard these names used for God? Are there any names you haven't heard used before? Any that you don't know what they mean?



Lego™/play dough names

A chance to reflect on the meanings of God's names

You will need: Lego™ or play dough; a list/display of names for God [WEB](#).

- Invite the children to choose a name for God from the suggestions, or think of a name they might use for God, then to use the Lego™/play dough to create a picture of the name.
- You could take photos of their creations to show on a large screen later in the session, or on your church social media in the week.
- While they create, invite everyone to reflect on the discussion questions, and perhaps try to find the name they have chosen in the Bible.

Conversation point: Why might God have that name? What does that name tell us about God?

Prince of Peace crowns

Decorate biscuits to celebrate the Prince of Peace

You will need: round biscuits (digestives or rich teas) or bake some in advance (using a 'crown' card template to cut round); icing, iced gems/jelly tots/sprinkles.

- Invite the children to decorate a biscuit using icing and 'jewels', to look like a crown fit for the Prince of Peace.

Conversation point: What might our country or our world look like with a 'Prince of Peace' in charge?



Paperchain prayers

How do we relate to God?

You will need: strips of coloured paper, a list/display of names of God [WEB](#).

- Talk about how one person can be known by different names, but it might feel strange to call your dad 'Mr [surname]'! Or call a teacher by their first name. Depending on our relationship to that person, some names feel more comfortable to use than others. The same is true for God – perhaps 'Abba Father' feels natural, but 'Mighty Ruler' doesn't connect.
- Invite everyone to write or draw on a strip of paper some of the names or words that make God feel close to them. Help them to add their strip to the paperchain.

Conversation point: Which name for God feels most helpful to you? Which name for God do you find challenging?

Jesus name plaque

Make a dynamic symbol

You will need: square wooden dowel rods; either stickers and grid templates (template on [WEB](#)), or rectangular plaques, glue, or Lego™ and backing plates.

- Show the children how to place lengths of dowel rods on a plaque, then carefully follow the picture/diagram on the template provided, so the negative space spells out 'Jesus'.

Conversation point: What does the name of Jesus mean to you? What space could you make for Jesus this Christmastime?



Suggestions for a short all-age talk

- Reflecting on the power of names – our legal name, or nicknames, pet names, titles (mummy/grandpa/son). Some of those names might give a clue about what we mean to someone.
- The awkward feeling of using a 'different' name – calling your parents 'Mr/Mrs'; calling your teacher their first name, or worse, "mum/dad"! If someone you don't know called you by your special nickname, how would it feel?
- God's many names – formal (e.g. Jesus), names about God's character (e.g. Abba Father, Wonderful Counsellor), names about God's acts (e.g. Creator, Redeemer).
- Reflect on the names in Isaiah 9:6 – what do they mean? Do they feel familiar or 'awkward'? What do they tell us about the Jesus who we are celebrating this Christmas?
- How can we know God through these names?

Table Talk during a shared meal/snack time

Share some simple food and drink while you reflect back on the session

- What names might we give to Jesus, from our own experience, e.g. prayer-answerer; good listener; always-with-me?
- What names might God give to us?

Somewhere to finish

Is there a new 'side' of God that you have seen today, from thinking about God's many names? Over the Christmas season, listen out for different names of God in Christmas songs or stories. When you are praying, perhaps try using some of God's different names as you pray, e.g. Creator God or Wonderful Counsellor, which can help you remember other aspects of God's character.

Finish by singing a Christmas carol that uses different names for God – see song suggestions in the Christmas tree decoration activity.



The heart of Christmas – giving and receiving

Clare Williams offers a Christmas-themed resource reflecting on the heart of Christmas – adaptable for a youth session, school assembly or church service.

Gather

Ask the young people to play a game where you give some lyrics from a Christmas song or carol and they have to complete them, e.g.

- I don't want a lot for Christmas, there is just one thing I need,
I don't care about the...
Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed, where a...

Finish with the carol 'In the bleak midwinter' and one of the verses:

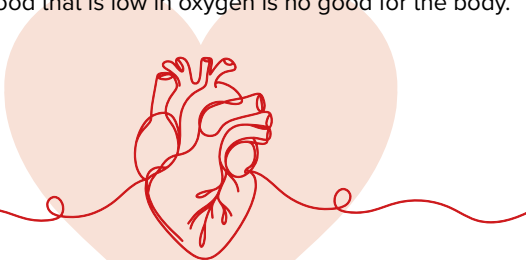
- 'What can I give him, poor as I am, if I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb, if I were a wise man, I would do my part, but what I can I give him...'

Introduction

The carol 'In the bleak midwinter' talks about being able to give Jesus our heart, as a gift. This session focuses on the idea of the heart as a gift we can give, but also as a gift to ourselves.

Watch the video exploring how the heart works
<https://bbc.in/43GHcgl> (or the first 2 minutes)

The most important thing to note here is about blood flowing into and out of the heart: blood that comes in needs to be filled up with oxygen before it can be passed back out around the body. Blood that is low in oxygen is no good for the body.



This gives us an important image about our giving and receiving, we may want to give and do and share (as we are encouraged to do particularly at Christmas time) but we can't do that without first receiving ourselves, refilling and refuelling with what we need. The heart gives us a beautiful image of the importance of **giving** – blood would also be no good if it wasn't pumped out again and around the body – but also **receiving first** (it would also be no good if it was not oxygenated), giving to others but also giving to ourselves.

What happens if we just take in and don't give out to others?

What do we need to receive from God to be able to give to others?

Share the Word

Focus Bible verse: Proverbs 4.23

Guard your heart because it is the wellspring of life.

This might be a helpful image and phrase to return to during the season of Christmas as there may be many pressures on us to want things – and the message that that is the only way we can be happy – to give things, to have the best and most magical time and to be generous; often focusing on generosity based primarily on money.

'Guard your heart' reminder

- Invite the young people to create a paper heart chain by folding and cutting paper (see video for instructions [WEB](#)). Do this so that you have eight hearts joined together. On one side write out the verse, one word on each heart with 'because it is' on just one heart. On the other side write your name at one end and then various ways in which you might feel under pressure in these ways over Christmas, or even people who you might need to give to. This can serve as a reminder to guard your own heart, not as a selfish act, but as a way which makes you able to give to others and be what you need to be for others.

Focus Bible passage: Luke 2:1-20, but specifically verse 19

But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

Mary gave much of herself at the first Christmas, travelling to Bethlehem, giving birth, caring for her newborn son Jesus. But we are told she also took time to ponder and treasure the words, presence, gifts and actions going on around her.



Ask: What you are giving out and what you are bringing into your heart and treasuring this Christmas?

Explore & respond

A range of activities to explore the theme.

Six litre game

The heart pumps around six litres of blood per minute. Fill one large container with six litres of water and then invite a young person to try and transfer the water from the large container into another, using a small cup or scoop. See how much they can achieve in one minute. You can try this in teams as well as a race. Discuss afterwards how hard it was, and explain that your heart does this without you even noticing, every minute.

Flowing in and flowing out

Play a video/audio of a heartbeat and invite the young people to lie down or get comfortable in some way and close their eyes, if they feel happy to do so. Invite everyone to begin by visualising their heart beating and to feel it in their chest. Then ask them to imagine what they want to be flowing in and flowing out over the Christmas season, i.e. *flowing in* – what do they need to be healthy, to take time to receive from God? *Flowing out* – how do they want to treat others, what sort of generosity do they want to show?

Invite the young people to share afterwards if they wish to. Discuss together different ways of giving 'oxygen' to yourself and how you might give to others in a healthy way, and, how that might look different if you've looked after yourself first.

Calm your heart

Talk together about what happens in your body when you are under stress. The young people might come up with all sorts of physical symptoms. Focus in on the heart and the fact that this tends to beat faster. This is often referred to as the 'fight or flight' response – your heart is pumping faster in order to give you the energy and oxygen to run away from or to fight, whatever it is that is causing you stress.

There are various things which might help calm this, slow our heart back down and de-stress. Again, together, discuss some ideas. There is a system within our body called the parasympathetic nervous system which we can activate ourselves, if we need to, in order to help regulate ourselves and become calm in stressful situations. This will bring our heart rate down and help us to feel better.



Set up some simple activities which could be used like **prayer stations** to help the young people to try some of these things out. At each one have the words from Proverbs written out and the relevant instructions (see below) at each station.

- Lip balm** – running clean fingers over your lips activates parasympathetic nerve fibres. Reflect here about slowing down and guarding your heart before choosing what to say or which words to use.
- Nature** – *provide an outdoor space or a large indoor plant*. Being in nature helps to activate our parasympathetic nervous system. Reflect here about guarding your heart when you might respond in a certain way and taking yourself out of the situation.
- Breathing** – we've thought a lot about the heart and its function of pumping oxygen around the body. Reflect here about guarding your heart in order to give to others. Think about someone you want to give to or share with this Christmas and, as you do, practise 'box breathing', where you close your eyes and count as you breathe – some people find it helpful to visualise a box as they do. Begin by breathing in for four, then hold for a count of four, breathe out for a count of four and then pause. Regulating your breathing in this way also helps to activate your parasympathetic nervous system.
- Self-care** – there are also parasympathetic nerve fibres running all the way down our upper arms. Wrap your arms around yourself and give yourself a hug, running your hands gently up and down the upper arms. As you do this, ponder and treasure ways God is at work in your life, think again about how to guard your heart and practice ways to look after yourself as you give to others.

Braided hearts

Make Danish braided hearts [WEB](#). These are paper hearts of two halves which reflect what we've been talking about in this session – receiving from God and taking care of ourselves, in order to give to others.

Invite the young people to write or draw on one half of the heart what we can receive from God/how to look after yourself and guard your heart. Then write or draw on the other half who they want to give to/share with and how they can go about this.

Say: The finished decoration can go on your Christmas tree, or you can even fill it with sweet treats or something else to give as a gift to someone – or perhaps to yourself!



Go with God

At Christmas, we remember the gift of Jesus, giving us salvation, hope, peace and relationship with God. As we receive from God, we are filled to give ourselves back to God and others.

 Finish by singing, listening to or praying the words of the carol 'In the Bleak Midwinter' [WEB](#).

