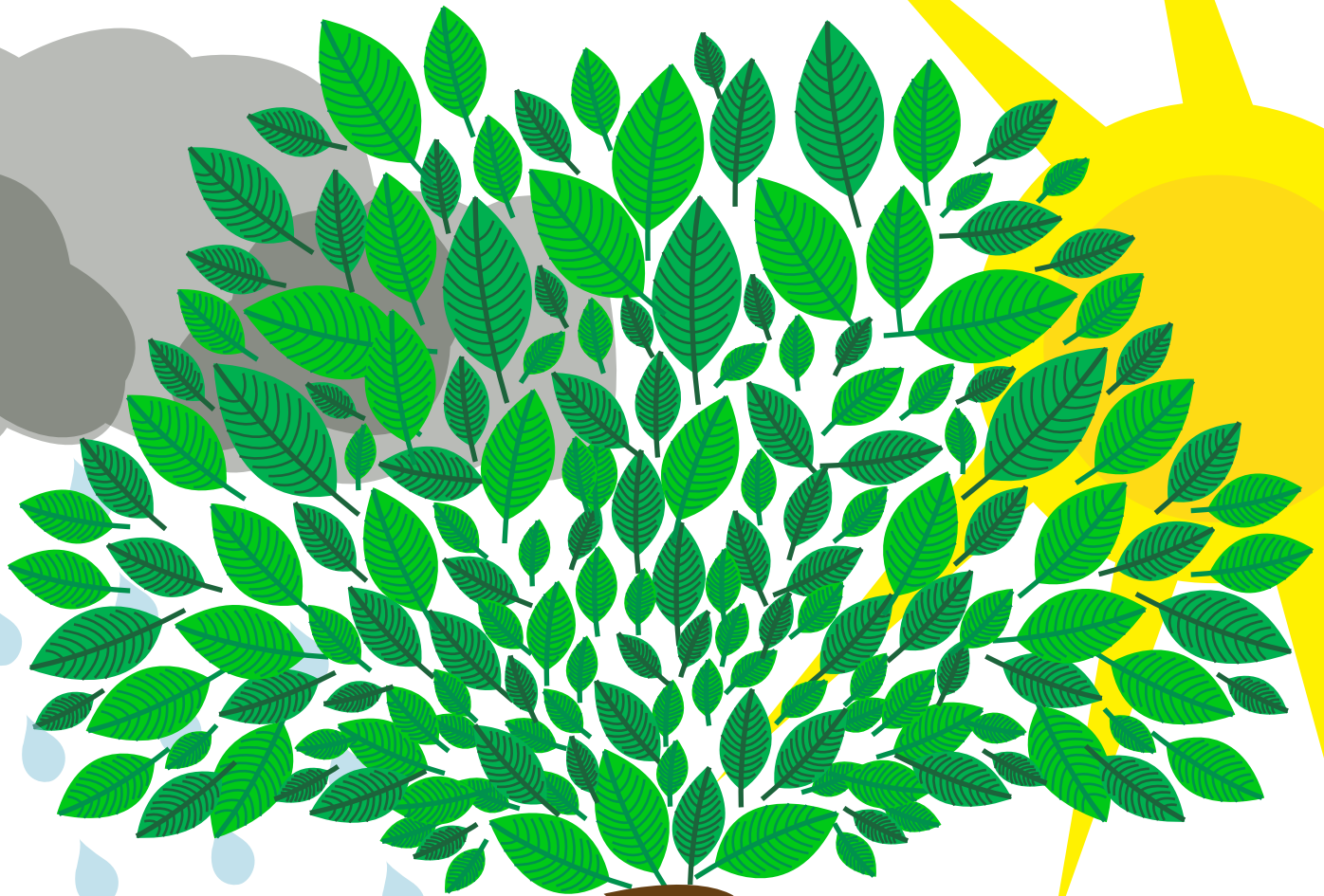




The  
United  
Reformed  
Church **Children**



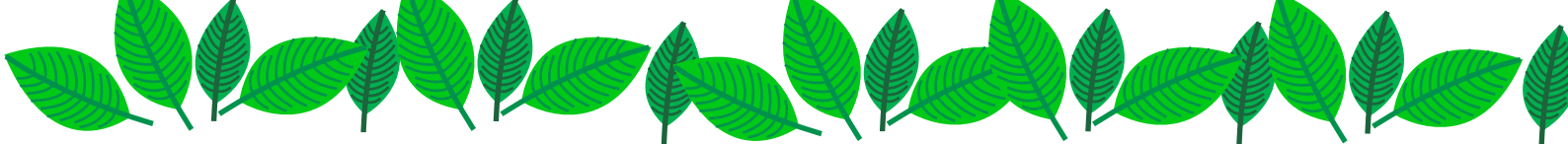
The  
United  
Reformed  
Church **Youth**



# COMMON GROUND

2020 Children's and Youth Work theme

Resources for everyone engaging with children,  
young people and young adults



# Welcome to the United Reformed Church Children’s and Youth Work resource for our 2020 theme: Common ground

In many ways, these are troubling times, with divisions between people causing wounds at a time when our need to come together to care for our shared environment is most pressing. We pray that this resource will enable all ages to seek, find and celebrate common ground in our churches and beyond. We hope you will find material you can use and adapt for your work with children, young people and young adults. Please be creative and don’t limit yourself to looking only at the section that most obviously fits your context. We would love to have your feedback and examples of how you have used and improved these resources. With permission, we will share stories through our Facebook page [www.fb.me/URCchildren.and.youthand.youth](http://www.fb.me/URCchildren.and.youthand.youth). If you have no children or young people connected with your church, please:

- enjoy the colouring pages and use some of the prayers and materials with adult groups
- pray for those churches near you that do have children or young people
- offer these resources to your nearest uniformed group or school.

PILOTS have their own pull-out section with four session plans that can be used to work towards leading a service. There is also a sample Friends On Faith Adventures (FOFA) session. There are lots of games, craft and other ideas in these pages which can be used by all. To find out more about setting up a Pilots Company or FOFA group, please email [stephen.tait@urc.org.uk](mailto:stephen.tait@urc.org.uk).

All material can be photocopied. ENJOY!

Jenny Mills – Convenor,  
Children’s and Youth Work Committee

Sam Richards – Head of Children’s and Youth Work

Lorraine Webb – Children’s and Youth  
Work Programme Officer

## Contents

What is this thing called common ground?	3
Pre-school plus	5
Additional needs	8
URC children plus	10
All age Communion	14
Common ground puppet script	16
Walking the way challenge	17
Messy Church ideas	18
Outdoor worship – common ground	20
Preparing to lead worship	22
Pilots worship	23
Friends on Faith Adventure	29
Uniformed organisations	32
Spoken word, prayers and poems	35
Music and video clips	38
URC Youth plus	42
Finding common ground – the Tower of Babel	44
URC Youth and young adults plus	47
Puzzle pages	50

### Special thanks to:

- Pilots – especially Mick Smerdon (Pilots Captain/SPO), Mathew Henderson (Pilots leader) and Susan Henderson from Nairn United Reformed Church Pilots
- CYDO+ team – especially Ruth White, Nicola Grieves, Judy Harris, Steven Mitchell, Jane Henderson, Matt Baines and the URC Youth Executive
- Friends and colleagues at Church House and elsewhere – especially Heather Wilkinson, Triin Kubar, Lorraine Webb, Sam Richards, the Revd Jenny Mills, the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, Susan Stead, the Revd Roger Jones, Sam Brown (13th Bromley BB), Sonya Stevenson (12th Stoke-on-Trent GB), URC Guide and Scout Fellowship.

Colouring pages designed by Samara Andrews. Edited by Lorraine Webb and Sam Richards. Design by Laura Jones

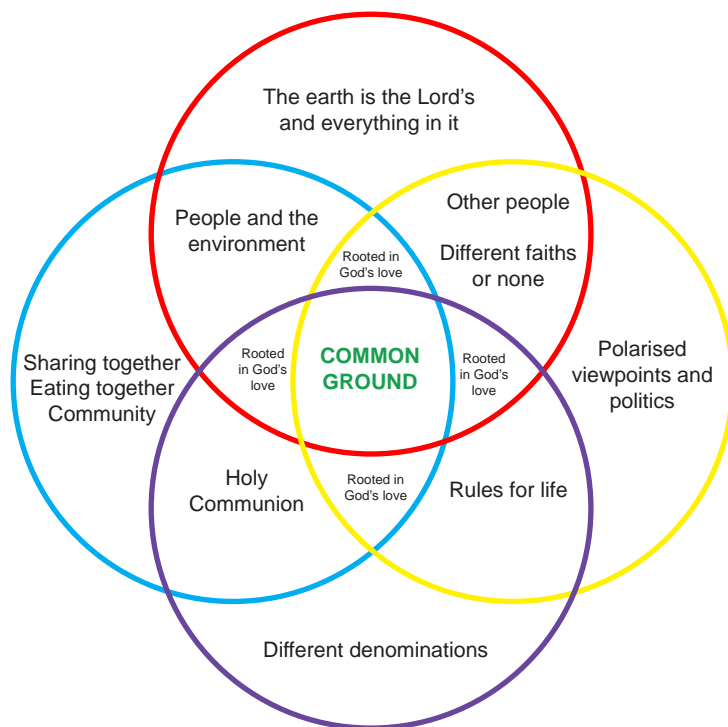


## What is this thing called common ground?

The world we live in sometimes seems to focus on differences, for good or bad. We celebrate diversity and may enjoy learning more about those whose life experience or world view is different from our own, yet at the same time we can become polarised in our outlook and drawn, however unconsciously, to thinking in terms of 'them' and 'us'. People are divided by so many different things and in so many different ways. In the playground, in society, in politics and even in the church, it can be all too easy to spot the things that divide us and overlook the common ground. And yet, common ground is where open, honest communication is best fostered and unity can grow.

The phrase 'common ground' originates in the concept of land which was held "in common", – anyone could use it to graze their animals. It was free and open to all. Communities would hold this land, and other resources 'in common', to the benefit of all, and would also hold community celebrations, feasts and fairs on it. This reminds us that 'the earth is the Lord's and everything in it'. Our first interpretation of common ground is that we all inhabit the same earth and are stewards of a common ground which we can nurture and protect or rashly exploit and destroy, to the good or potential harm of all. We might explore this theme considering our stewardship, our responsibility for this world we share and by giving thanks for the gift of our world from God.

'In common' also brings out the theme of sharing resources. For the early disciples, common ground came through sharing accommodation, food, possessions and time. They felt called to a communal life. Nowadays we are more likely to live a very individual life as far as our resources are concerned – we are centred on our personal possessions and modern life can be very materialistic. We are taught to share, but also to look after our own possessions and have a sense of ownership. Our exploration of common ground may encourage us to think about times when it is more meaningful to share. This brings two of our Holy Habits to mind: eating together – sharing a meal in common, a good way of building relationship and fellowship – and sharing



in the meal which we have in common with many denominations to commemorate the Last Supper, Holy Communion.

And so we begin to seek the common ground, the things that unite us. We see something of ourselves in others as we consider what it means to be human. We see something of our faith in that of others in different Christian denominations and different faith communities, and in the values and ethics of those of no faith at all. We see something of our basic principles in the views of those whose ethics and politics differ from ours. And these touching points where our lives intersect, this common ground, it is here that relationship grows and understanding is nourished. We remember Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23: (*The Message*).

*'I kept my bearings in Christ – but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view ... I did all this because of the Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!'*

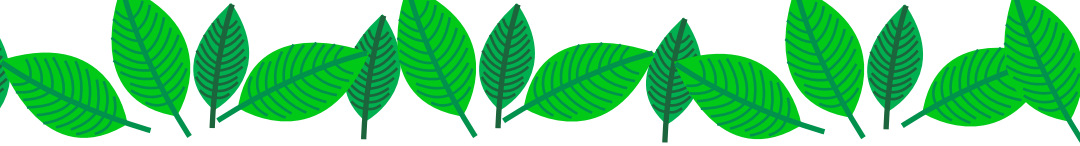




NEAR  
WATER  
STREAM

New plants like  
trees growing

roots sending out  
water



## Decorate gingerbread people

Make or buy gingerbread people. Decorate these using writing icing as glue and small sweets, sprinkles etc as decoration, or just with writing icing. Small children may need some support squeezing the tubes. This will show that we are all as different as our creations, all made by God and in God's image (same gingerbread shape) but all different. Tastes good too.

## It's a wrap

A fun foodie way to do self portraits. Put food items onto a wrap using cheese spread as the glue. Here's an example from Wessex Synod's children's day 2019.



## Parachute game

The aim of the game is to try and find something that ALL the group members have in common. Everyone stands holding an edge of the parachute. As the group lifts the parachute, the leader shouts out an attribute such as 'is an only child', 'goes to school' and so on. Everyone who has that attribute runs under the parachute and swaps places. Try to find something that will make everyone run underneath. The children can have a go at thinking up attributes and trying to find the common ground.

## Nature walks

Take your children on a little walk around the area. Encourage them to notice nature, the things that God has made. Celebrate the common ground that God has given us. You can draw or take rubbings of nature, collect bits to make a world collage back at church or even use digital cameras to take photos.



## Spot the similarity

Get the children to sit down. Choose two or three items which have something in common – eg three different balls or three different teddies. Can the children guess what's the same about them? Then choose two or three children who have something in common such as the same coloured t-shirt or the same initial. These children stand up and the rest of the group have to try and spot what is the same about them.

## One Earth

Get the children to paint their hands; paint the palm of the hand blue/green and fingers each a different colour. Then press four hands onto paper at right angles so that the palms overlap. Use a felt tip pen to draw hair and faces on the people. Talk about how the world is ours to share, that God has given it for us to look after. What can we do to keep our world clean and healthy?



## Down to earth

Encourage your little ones to explore a series of different natural surfaces outdoors or in a sensory bin: maybe some pebbles, some grass, some soil, some leaves (autumn leaves and spring leaves) etc. Talk to them about the feel of the materials and reinforce that God made the pebbles, grass etc for us to share.



## Teddy bears' picnic

Encourage each child to bring a teddy or doll to a picnic. Talk about what food teddy might like to eat, what would be needed to make a picnic to share. Can you decide on some foods that lots of teddies (and their children) might all like? At the picnic talk about how God likes us to share things together – our toys, our time, our food. Wonder about what things we like to share and whether it is easy to share things. See if you can encourage children to feed each others' teddies rather than just their own.





## Fruit salad

Make sure all the children wash their hands. You need grapes (cut in half lengthways to avoid choking risk), seedless easy peelers, raisins, strawberries, sliced apple, and enough small bowls for each child to have one. With the children, talk about sharing and how we are going to share in making a fruit salad. Involving all the children, share the fruit equally in the bowls. If one child does not like any of the fruit, talk about swapping as a way of making things fair and see if anyone will swap with them. (If not, it might be a good idea for the adults to have bowls of fruit too and to be willing to swap.)

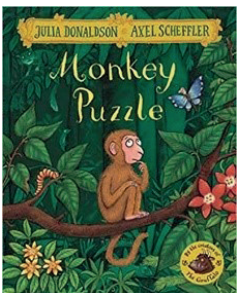


## Paper people

Use templates of people and encourage each child to decorate one as a self portrait using collage, crayons, paints etc. Stick identical heart-shaped stickers on each and say that we are all different but we are all loved by God just the same.

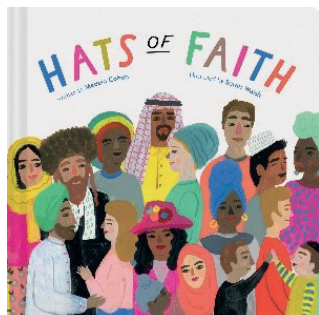
## Me and you

As you play with your baby, point to different parts of their body and to the same parts on your own body. Sing, to the tune of Frere Jacques: 'You have two eyes, you have two eyes. So do I, so do I. You are loved by God and, You are loved by God and so am I, so am I.'



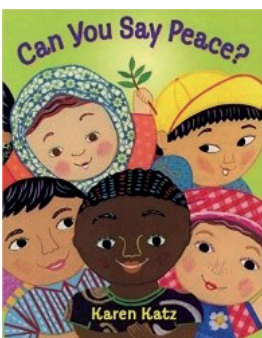
## Monkey Puzzle

A brilliant, moving story that can be used to explore that we are all made by God in God's image. Think about how the important thing in this story is the baby monkey made in the image of the mother monkey. God made us all and we can see things in each other that remind us of God. We are all God's children.



## Hats of Faith

Medea Cohan has written this lovely board book about diversity and faith by focusing on the headcoverings people wear. It encourages curiosity and respect for differences, while acknowledging that all the people have something in common. There is a linked website ([www.hatsoffaith.com](http://www.hatsoffaith.com)) which includes lots of useful extra reading and activities, including an interfaith education pack with colouring sheets and more information.



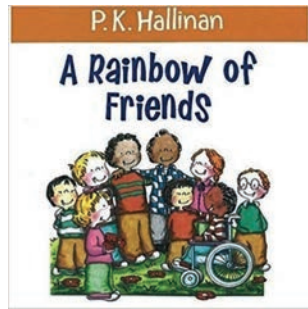
## Can you Say Peace?

This colourful book by Karen Katz explores how children around the world say 'peace'; all different languages in different countries convey the same feeling that peace is important. International Peace Day is 21 September. Perhaps you could use this book around that time to try some different ways of saying 'peace' to one another.



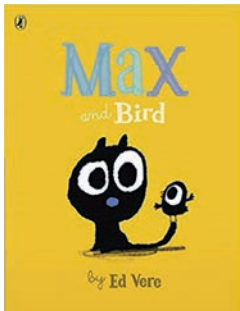
**All are Welcome**

*All Are Welcome* lets young children know that no matter what, they have a place, they have a space and they are welcome in their school. You could talk about how to make a version for the church group they belong to. How can we show different people all being welcome because God loves them all?



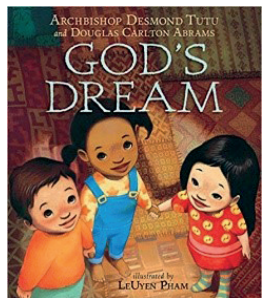
**A Rainbow of Friends**

Through colourful illustrations and upbeat verse, author PK Hallinan shows that when we celebrate the uniqueness of others, our lives are enriched and the world is a better place for all. Encourage children to talk about their friends and what they have in common, despite their differences.



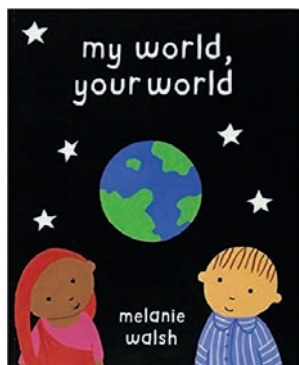
**Max and Bird**

A story that shows friendship through difference, meeting on common ground and working together – even when it is a friendship that shouldn't really work!



**God's Dream**

Archbishop Desmond Tutu's vision of God's dream is shared here in a book for younger children, showing how we can be brothers and sisters as God's children, even though we are all different, and even sometimes hurt each other and have to say sorry and forgive others.



**My World, your World**

Pierre says 'bonjour'. George says 'hello'. But ... they both say 'achoo!' when they sneeze. The world is full of all sorts of people, speaking different languages and living different kinds of lives, but deep down people are basically the same wherever they live.

# Additional needs



## Acts 2 46-47

The believers met together in the Temple every day.

They all had the same purpose.

They broke bread in their homes, happy to share their

food with joyful hearts.

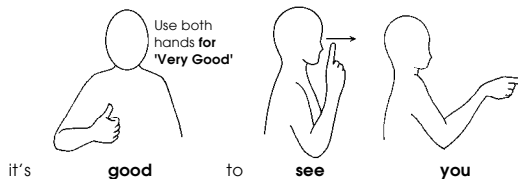
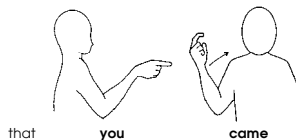
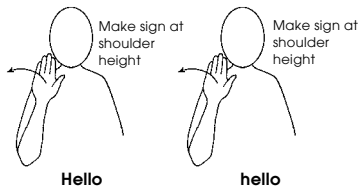
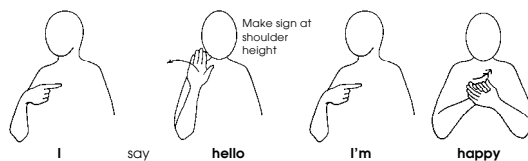
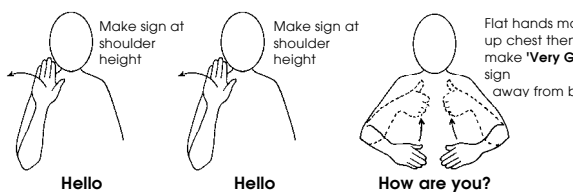
They praised God, and all the people liked them.

More and more people were being saved every day; the

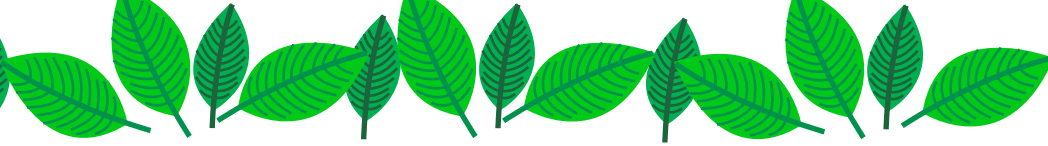
Lord was adding those people to the group of believers.

## Hello song

Join in with Justin when he sings the theme tune from Something Special, the Hello Song: (see also [bit.ly/hello-j](http://bit.ly/hello-j) or [www.makaton.org](http://www.makaton.org))







Many children and young people with additional needs have difficulty with aspects of eating. They may be fed via a gastrostomy tube and may or may not be able to have tasters of foods; so it is important to check with parents/carers. They may need liquids to be thickened or solid foods to be liquidised in order to be able to eat them safely; they may have a limited diet and be affected by taste, colour, temperature and/or texture of foodstuffs; they may be averse to food touching on the plate. Eating together does not mean all eating the same thing. At the same time, eating together can be a good opportunity for building communication, using symbols to request foodstuffs or thinking about what each person likes or dislikes when they eat.

### Make pizza together

Use pizza dough mix – lots of opportunity for sensory exploration of the dough by kneading, rolling and stretching. Spread with tomato puree or tomato sauce and sprinkle grated cheese on top. Use photographs or symbols to show what to do at each stage of the process.



### Plan a teddy bear's picnic

What would you put on the menu so that everyone has something to eat that they like? Share the food between the teddies (and their owners). Tell the story of the Big Picnic (see [bit.ly/bpicnic](http://bit.ly/bpicnic)).



### Sensory tray with different food textures in

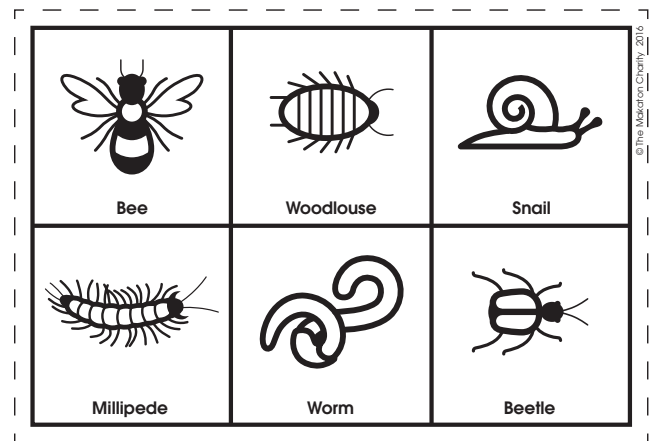
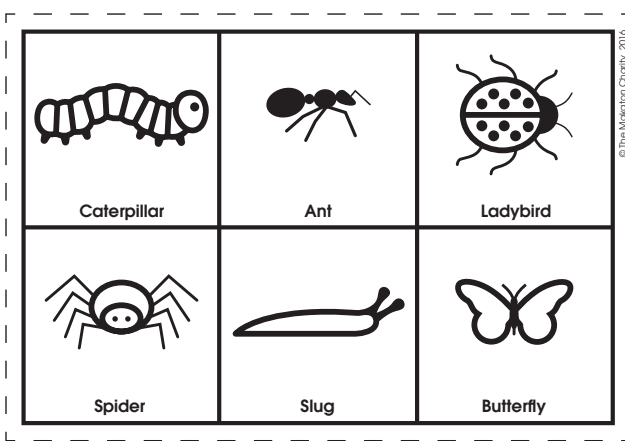
Jelly, rice crispies, custard, cold spaghetti, baked beans, ice cubes, warm mashed potato, chocolate mousse, broccoli florets – give children the opportunity to explore these together. Check in advance for allergies.

### Jesus feeds a crowd

Watch this video [bit.ly/bpicnic](http://bit.ly/bpicnic) or read *Jesus feeds a crowd*. You could use the signed Bible verse God cares for you: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhiMXovYV2M&t=6s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhiMXovYV2M&t=6s). Talk about how God has given us all food – some we like and some we don't like. We can share food together because everyone needs enough to eat and God has given enough for everyone to share.

### Mini beasts bingo

How many mini beasts share this place with us? Print off the six different mini beast bingo cards and then start hunting! The first to complete their card wins. Here are two examples: [www.makaton.org/Assets/Store/FreeResources/MiniBeastBingo.pdf](http://www.makaton.org/Assets/Store/FreeResources/MiniBeastBingo.pdf). Print of enough copies for each of the people playing. This game is designed so that if you only have three people playing they can have two boards each if required. Go into the outdoor space and give the bingo cards and a pen to each player so they can mark off any mini beasts that they find.





## Paper plate weaving

A good activity that looks great, is easy to differentiate for different ages and abilities, and is good for developing fine motor skills. Using a paper plate, draw a shape in the centre and make holes around the edge of the shape to weave wool through or, for more dextrous children, use an embroidery needle and thread and let them pierce the plate themselves (risk assess before doing this activity.) The shape can be anything you choose. Crosses, hearts, fish, person etc. The craft can help us consider how we are all different like the different wools used in the craft, but together we make something beautiful. For an example, see [www.redtedart.com/paper-plate-heart-sewing-craft](http://www.redtedart.com/paper-plate-heart-sewing-craft).



## Personal bunting

A very simple but effective craft. Each child has a blank bunting flag (any shape, either fabric or paper). They decorate the flag with self portraits, pictures and information about them. They can share some of their facts with the group before stringing the flags together. A celebration of how we are all unique but together are the family of God.

## Wonderful worlds. Celebrating the common ground we live on

You will need shaving foam, ceramic white baubles, inks and trays.

1. Spray shaving foam into a tray to give a full, flat layer.
2. Drizzle some inks onto the foam and using a stick give it a swirl (be gentle.)
3. Hold your globe by the top and twirl it through the top of the foam until it is covered.
4. Wait a few minutes then wipe off the foam.
5. Hang it up to dry.



## People bingo (with a twist)

For this game, each child designs their own bingo card. Everyone is given a sheet with nine squares on. The child writes something about themselves in each square eg 'I am an only child', 'I have never been on a plane', 'I have a pet' and so on. The game begins and each child moves around the group trying to find as many people as possible that share some of their own attributes. It can lead to a discussion about the things that make us unique in our group and where the common ground is.

## Ten fingers

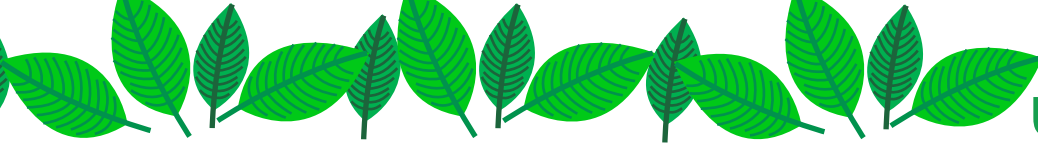
Sit in a circle and each hold up ten fingers. Take it in turns to make a true statement about yourself eg 'I have blue eyes', 'I have two sisters', 'I went to Australia in the holidays'. Each child thinks about whether they have that in common with the person who said it. If they do not, they put down one finger. If they do, they keep the finger up. Once all ten fingers are down, that person is out. The winner is the person who keeps at least one finger. This can lead to a discussion about what things were surprising, what is nice about finding things in common with someone else, whether anyone is so unique that they have nothing in common with anyone else etc.

## That's my orange

Split the group into two equal teams. Secretly tell each team what they need – tell team A they need the orange so they can use the peel to make a cake and tell team B they need the orange to use the juice to make a drink. Sit the teams in two lines facing one another and put one orange into the middle. Tell the groups that, without moving from where they are sitting, they have three minutes to get what they need. Set a timer and say 'go'. After three minutes, stop the timer. Discuss how they resolved the conflict (if at all) what methods they used, who won the debate, whether anything surprised them, what they could have done differently and how the activity can help us think about approaching conflict in other situations.

## Common ground

Cultivate a patch of ground soil together. What plants might grow there? Each child could plant different salad seeds into the ground. When they grow, share in a salad together. Decorate stones and use them to make a path through your garden.



## Flower power

On a large piece of paper, draw a flower by drawing a circle in the centre and then one petal for every member of the group. Through discussion with one another, each person should find one thing about themselves which is completely unique from anyone else in the group and write this on their petal. Then the whole group should find something that everyone in the group has in common (not just two eyes, human etc) and write this in the centre.

## All stars

Use one apple per child in the group. Each person chooses an apple. Get them to examine it carefully, maybe even make up a story about it to tell to the others. Then put the apples all together. Can the children each find their own apple again? Talk about how they were able to recognise their apple. Say that one thing that we all have in common is that we have a star inside. Cut the apples in half horizontally and look at the star pattern the core and pips make. Get each child to think about what star they might have inside – what gifts and talents God has given them. You could use the apples to eat together or to print apple/star patterns with paint.

## Our earth

Look at pictures of Earth from space. How would you describe it? Listen to the song 'From a Distance' or read it as a poem. What does this make you think? What responsibility do we have for the earth? Cover a tray with shaving foam and swirl green and blue paint into it with a lollipop stick or a fork. What patterns can you make? Lay a circle of paper onto the surface to imprint a pattern on the circle. Glue the circles on a black sugar paper background. Write in white or silver on the background 'The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it'. Think of three things you can do to help protect the environment and write them on the paper too.



## Communal junk modelling

Get children each to bring in some junk for junk modelling and put a Post-it with their name on each item they bring in. Put all the junk into one big box. Set a junk modelling challenge for children but get them to keep the Post-its for each piece of junk they use. Then get them to thank the children who brought each piece of junk that contributed to their model. Put the models all on display together.

## Paper chain people

Make a paper chain of people where each person has one thing the same as the person next to them – the same skin colour, the same colour eyes or hair, the same item of clothing – but everything else different. Then stick an identical heart sticker on each of them to say we are all loved by God just the same, that is something we all have in common.



## Sort of snap

Make a game of cards, each card having a picture of a different item on. Pick up two cards and describe how they're the same. If you can, you can keep the cards. You could use old Christmas cards or birthday cards for this activity.

## Blurring boundaries

Colour some coffee filter paper with felt tip pens. Each colour represents our differences, as people or our different view points. Drop water onto the paper and watch the colours combine. Or, place the filter in a baking tray and pour water over it. Once dry, the paper can be used as a light catcher that can go on the window.







## Patchwork prayers

Use an old picture frame or make a frame out of card. Cut up lots of small pieces of fabric, as assorted in design as possible. Using sticky back plastic, cover the frame at the back with the sticky side upward in the frame. Invite people to think about their own uniqueness and how others may challenge them. Holding the square of cloth, reflect on the colours and the weave of the fabric. Ask God to help you understand other points of view that challenge you. Place the square into the frame. As the prayers are added, the frame will be filled with a patchwork of fabric prayer.

## Hello Hello

The leader should first spend some time becoming familiar with the list of greetings before introducing them to the children. It can be turned into a game – put the greetings onto individual small cards with enough matching pairs for your group. Have the children each pick one secretly and then find their partner, who has the same greeting, by going up to the others and using their greeting.

**From Sri Lanka:** In Sinhalese, people greet each other with hands together as in prayer and a slight bow of the upper body. They say a word that sounds like ‘Are-you-bow-an’.

**From Japan:** In Japanese, the greeting sounds like ‘Kon-eechi-wa’. *Ohayo gozai-mass* (or just *Ohayo*) means ‘good morning’. *Kom-ban wa* means ‘good evening’.

**From Eritrea:** To greet someone, hold each other by the right hand and gently pull together, touching shoulders three times. The word to use is the Arabic word for peace, pronounced ‘Salaam’. *Kom-ban wa* means ‘good evening’.

**From Nigeria:** Some Nigerian tribal greetings for ‘hello’ include: *Kedu*, *Nõ* (short ‘o’) and *Kubay-obway*. Such greetings are usually accompanied by ‘hand and thumb’ shakes, with the other hand on the heart to emphasise sincerity, or under the elbow of the person being greeted.

**From South Africa:** *Sabona* = a Zulu hello, usually accompanied by handshake, then a thumb-and-hand shake, a rubbing of thumbs with the ends of the fingers interlocked. *Goeiemore* (pronounced *Hoi-amora*) = hello (in Afrikaans) *Dumela* = hello in Sotho.

**From New Zealand:** ‘*Tehi Mauria*’, means ‘I greet you’ – literally it means ‘I salute the breath of life in you’. It is traditionally accompanied by rubbing noses.



## Tina the Tree

This story is based on: Matthew 4:1-4. Related Bible passages include: Psalm 104:16-17, Psalm 148:9-10, Psalm 1:2-3, Psalm 104, Psalm 148:7-10, Isaiah 40:30, Isaiah 40:31, Luke 13:

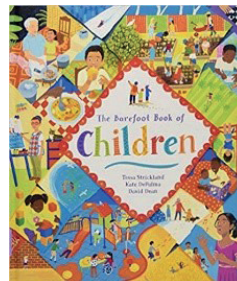
18-19. Available as a book or as a big-screen storytelling kit from [www.lostsheep.com.au/stories/tina-the-tree/](http://www.lostsheep.com.au/stories/tina-the-tree/)



## Where Children Sleep

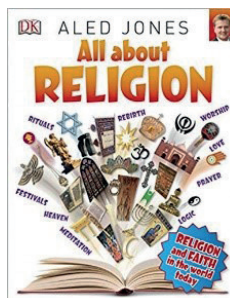
This is a collection of large photographs of children’s bedrooms around the world. Each photo has a portrait of the children whose bedrooms are featured and tells a little about each child’s story. This book helps children to consider

how children in other situations live by comparing the common space of a bedroom. It can be VERY expensive to buy a copy but most good libraries stock it. There is also one about where children play.



## The barefoot Book of Children

This lovely book was compiled with the guidance of diversity specialists and reflects a wide range of children around the globe, encouraging readers to develop curiosity and respect for diversity while recognising the interconnectedness of all people.



## All About Religion

Another fascinating non-fiction book, this time focusing on the big questions of life and different religions tackle them. It helps children understand how different faiths developed and why some people follow them and others don’t. It promotes tolerance and respect for people whatever they believe and could prove an excellent starting point for a conversation about finding common ground with someone of a different faith.



THE WORLD AND ALL

THAT IS IN IT BELONG TO THE LORD

THE EARTH AND ALL

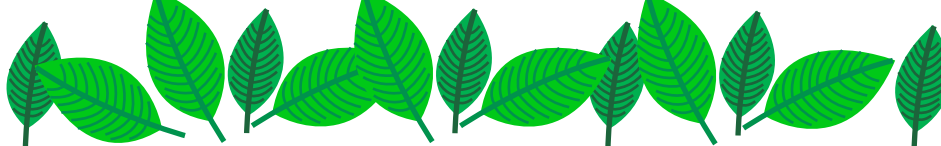
WHO LIVE ON IT

ARE HIS

PSALM 24 V1



# All age Communion



## Children in Communion – the common ground meal

Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, Eucharist, Mass: whatever term you use, the communal meal celebrated by believers to commemorate the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples is common ground to most Christian denominations. Parts of the liturgy, process and symbolism used form a common thread, even though different churches may have differing interpretations and individual traditions, and may differ on who may take part. The sharing of bread and wine is at the heart of our faith.

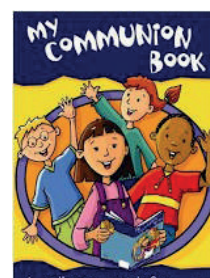
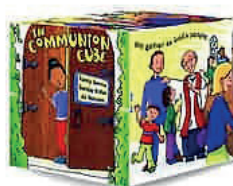
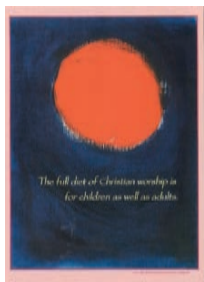
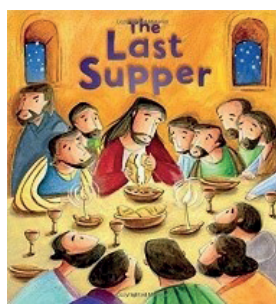
Individual congregations within the United Reformed Church may take differing views on the inclusion of children in Communion. Each church is encouraged to follow the pattern of worship that works best for them. However, the Charter for Children in the Church, endorsed by General Assembly in 1990, states that children are equal partners in the life of the Church and the full diet of worship is for children as well as adults. If Holy Communion is a key ingredient in the full diet of Christian worship, we should consider whether this is made accessible to our children as well as to adults. After all, if we wait until they are old enough to understand the mystery of God's amazing plan, we will be waiting forever. The key things to remember are that Communion must be delivered by an ordained minister or appointed elder, and that the structure of liturgy should follow at least the pattern of confession; forgiveness and words of grace; invitation; story; thanksgiving; breaking of bread and blessing of wine; sharing; and thanks. But the wording can be made more inclusive, as can be seen in this all age liturgy in the URC worship book: [www.urc.org.uk/images/Free-Ebooks/WB\\_Second\\_Order\\_of\\_Holy\\_Communion.pdf](http://www.urc.org.uk/images/Free-Ebooks/WB_Second_Order_of_Holy_Communion.pdf).) You can even involve the children in helping you write your own.



## How can we open the opportunity for children to be involved in Communion?

- Could children help to bake the bread which will be used for Communion?
- Could they decorate a Communion tablecloth?
- Could you use the symbols on this page's right-hand margin to make a tick sheet that children can use to follow the structure of the service and understand what's happening when? This tick sheet could even be added to the printed notice sheet if you have one, as it may not just be the children who use it!
- Children and young people can serve side by side with an adult or independently, with sufficient preparation and encouragement. They could do the call to worship, greet, read scripture, write prayers, set out the elements, lead some parts of the liturgy, or even work with the minister to rewrite the words of the liturgy in ways which are meaningful to them and yet still appropriate for all ages together.
- Use shorter prayers and be willing to explain bits of the service as you go along, so that children can follow.
- Could you set up a craft activity or a treasure box to explore with objects from the story and from communion (eg a cup and plate, a bottle labelled 'wine' and a model of bread made of salt dough, a picture of the upper room, a doll dressed as Jesus, a cross, a book with the story of the Last Supper)?
- Some churches that don't admit children to Communion bless and share milk and honey sandwiches instead.

One approach to forming a liturgy where children can be involved in Communion is to model it on the Jewish Passover meal, where a child asks questions of the assembled people.







## Liturgy for all-age Communion

A common ground Communion means just that – all can participate, regardless of age and ability. The one place where the church ought to be fully intergenerational is when we eat together. All it asks for is some belief that you love Jesus at whatever depth you are in your walk with God. This is our common ground. We are, after all, all created in God's image. So what happens when we celebrate the Lord's Supper is about God's grace, not yours or mine. Before the service:

- Think about how the room will be set out: is this a church with pews, or in the round or in cafe style?
- Think about what elements you are going to use for all those taking Communion – bread and 'wine' or biscuits and grapes? Common cup or individual glasses?
- Think about how and who prepares the table
- Think about who serves the bread and wine; if young people are present, it should be a mix of ages. How do you serve the elements? Do you eat and drink as it is served, or altogether? The important thing is sharing together and not making distinctions of any kind.

## The invitation

Come, come, everyone! The table is ready! Everything is prepared! Here is your invitation:  
Come as you are to eat and drink together to remember what Jesus has done for you!  
Come because you can and not because you have to. Come whether you've had a good or a bad week.  
Come as you are, whether you know loads about the Church or whether you are just starting to learn.  
Come because you are trying to be a faithful disciple of Jesus. Come because God loves you.  
So, come just as you are as one family, because we meet together on common ground.

## The story of that first Last Supper

*This is the story of that first Last Supper: Jesus and his 12 disciples were in Jerusalem for the Passover. One evening, on the night before Judas let him down, Jesus and his disciples sat in an upper room to eat a meal together of lamb and herbs and bread. The disciples were worried. They knew some people were plotting to kill Jesus because he was too popular. Jesus could see they were anxious, so he took a piece of the bread they were eating with their meal (take bread) and broke it apart (break bread). He thanked God for the bread and gave a piece to each of the disciples and told them, 'Think of this bread as being like my body so that every time you break bread in future, you will remember what I have done for you: dying because I love you so much'. Then he lifted up a cup full of wine (raise the cup), and said, 'This drink is a reminder that my blood will be spilled when I die but, don't worry, because I leave you with a promise: all wrong actions and hurtful words will be forgiven and everyone will have a chance to start over again because I love you so much.' This meal which Jesus shared with those first disciples is common ground with what we do today, a reminder of what Jesus did for us because he loves us so much. Let us thank God, as Jesus thanked God.*

## Prayer of thanksgiving

Loving God, creating bread and wine for sharing, in sending Jesus as our friend, you showed your great love for us, regardless of who we are or what we have done, promising that you will be with us, loving us always. We thank you that in Jesus nothing can separate us from that love, that in his dying and rising he has made us friends with you and with one another. We thank you that he has brought us together on common ground to share this meal so that we may be strengthened by his love. Through your Spirit, we take ordinary bread and a cup and set it apart as a reminder of all that Jesus has done for us in creating the opportunity to start all over again. Bless us now in our eating and our drinking and unite us in love and peace, with all your people of every time and every place, Loving God, for ever and ever. Amen

## Sharing together (after the bread and cup are distributed)

Take, eat, remembering all that Jesus has done for us because he loves us.  
Drink this, remembering the promise Jesus gave us, that he is with us always.

## Prayer after Communion

Loving God, we thank you that you have shared with us the bread of life and the cup of promise. We offer ourselves to continue to walk in his way, to live the life of Jesus today, a life of love and service to others. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

# Puppet script



**Elvis:** Hi Lucy, Do you know what's up with Bert? He's sitting all alone and looking very miserable, and when I tried to talk to him he said 'Go away, Elvis. You're not my friend any more!' I thought he'd forgiven me for putting that frog in his pyjamas last month.

**Lucy:** Don't worry about it, Elvis. It's not you. It's him. He's just not our kind of person. He doesn't fit in.

**Elvis:** What do you mean? Doesn't fit in? This is Bert we're talking about. Of course he fits in.

**Lucy:** No he doesn't. He's not OUR sort.

*Bert appears, standing the other side of Elvis.*

**Elvis:** Bert, what's going on? Why are you upset? Why did you say I'm not your friend? We've always been friends.

**Bert:** I can't be friends with you. You and Lucy don't like reading Jacqueline Wilson books, and neither of you support my favourite football team. *(Bert leans forward round Elvis and sings loudly at Lucy)* 'Come on you Blues!'

**Lucy:** That's right. I'd much rather read Harry Potter. I prefer real life stories. Neither of you are in my class at school, and you go to Cubs instead of Brownies. And as for football ... *(leans round Elvis and sings loudly at Bert)* 'Come on you Reds!'

**Bert:** Brownies schmownies ... Cubs is so much better. And class three is rubbish compared to class four! *(singing louder)* Come on you Blues!

**Lucy:** See, Elvis. How can Bert think we could be friends with him? He just doesn't fit in. *(singing even louder)* 'Come on you Reds!'

*Lucy and Bert turn their backs on each other and start singing 'Come on you Blues/Reds' increasingly loudly.*

**Elvis:** *(shouting)* Stop it – both of you! You're both being really silly.

*Lucy and Bert stop and look at him.*

**Elvis:** Being friends isn't about being exactly the same, you know. You can be friends and like different things. It's about finding the common ground. Bert, you like reading ...

**Bert:** Jacqueline Wilson ...

**Elvis:** while Lucy likes reading ...

**Lucy:** Harry Potter

**Elvis:** But don't you see ... You both like ...

**Lucy and Bert:** *(realisation dawning)* READING!!!

**Lucy:** Yes, we do love reading. Do you remember when we all sat together in the tree house reading until way past bedtime and our parents were looking for us everywhere?

**Bert:** Oh yes, that was fun. We all hid under a giant duvet with our books and torches.

**Elvis:** Lucy's in class three and we're in class four Bert, but we all go to ...

**Lucy and Bert:** THE SAME SCHOOL

**Bert:** I do love it when you call for me in the morning and we walk to school together.

**Lucy:** And you and Elvis always wait by my classroom door until I come out at break so we can play together.

**Elvis:** Exactly. You may wear different uniforms and go to different clubs after school, but aren't you both working on badges at the moment?

**Lucy:** Hmmmm ... I guess ... *(proudly)* I'm doing my First Aid badge.

**Bert:** Hey, I'm doing my Emergency Aid badge. That's probably the same thing. We could test each other.

**Lucy:** And I could practise tying you up in bandages!

**Bert:** But I don't know. I mean, you support the wrong football team. I still don't think we can be friends. *(singing)* 'Come on you Blues ...'

**Bert and Lucy:** Come on you Blues/Reds ... COME ON YOU BLUES/REDS!

**Elvis:** Stop it, both of you. It can be fun supporting different teams as long as you remember your common ground – the fact that you both like football. Supporting a football team isn't as important as being friends and getting on with one another.

**Bert:** I guess not.

**Elvis:** Sometimes we have things we disagree on. Sometimes they can be really important things and sometimes they might be little things. We need to stick to what we know is right. But when we look for the common ground, it helps us move forward together. Look at the disciples. They were all very different kinds of people and sometimes they disagreed with each other, but Jesus drew them all together as a team.

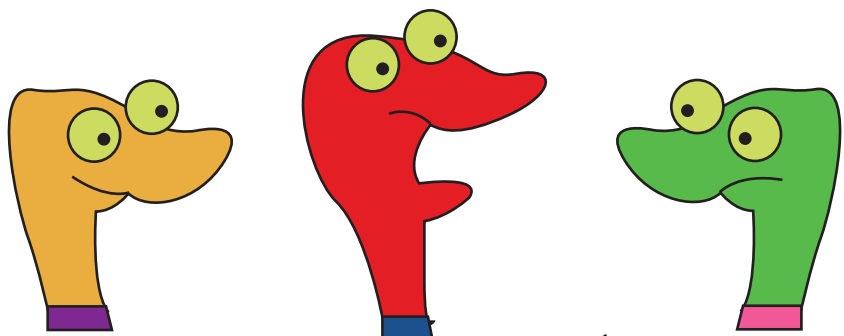
**Bert:** Their common ground was Jesus.

**Lucy:** Hey, that's our common ground too. God loves all of us just the same. I guess God doesn't want us to focus on our differences. Sorry Bert.

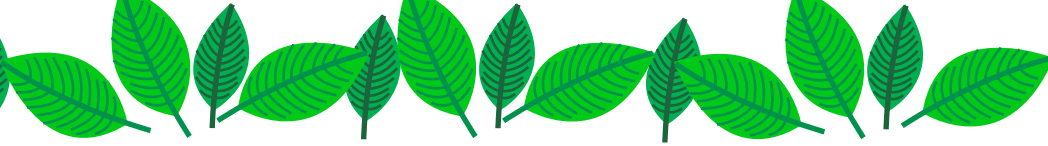
**Bert:** Sorry Lucy.

**Elvis:** Anyway, you nearly made me forget why I was looking for you both. Do you want to come up to the tree house for a tea party? I've made your favourite chocolate cake, Lucy, and your favourite lemon cake, Bert.

**Bert and Lucy:** Oh, yes please. I LOVE CAKE.







# Any and all age

**Walking the Way Discipleship Challenge:** You might choose to do one of these activities each day for a week, or maybe one a week over a longer period.



	<b>Eating together</b> 	<b>Sharing</b> 	<b>Experiencing</b> 	<b>Loving</b> 	<b>Learning</b> 	<b>Caring for God's world</b> 	<b>Living in Harmony</b> 
<b>Challenge</b>	<p>Invite someone to your house for a meal, perhaps someone you'd like to get to know better.</p> <p>Remember to say thank you to God before each meal you eat today</p> <p>Spend a whole day where every meal is eaten as a family around a table with no distractions. What will you talk about together?</p>	<p>Sort out your clothes or toys and find five things that you could take to a charity shop.</p> <p>Buy a big tub of icecream and share it with two friends. Thank God for your friends while you eat it.</p> <p>Bake a cake and take it to a club for the elderly, a homeless shelter, a club for the visually impaired, someone who works hard for others</p>	<p>Go without a snack or eat just a bowl of rice for one meal and think about what it might be like to go to bed hungry.</p> <p>Give your pocket money to a homeless charity</p> <p>Eat something new from a different culture</p> <p>Watch Paddington 1 and think about what it would be like to be a stranger/refugee</p>	<p>Look for someone who looks lonely on the playground and invite them to play with you</p> <p>Offer to help someone with something they are finding difficult.</p> <p>Make a card and send it to someone who might be feeling sick, or sad, or lonely.</p> <p>Give someone a hug and say something kind to them</p>	<p>Arrange to visit a place of worship for a different religion and see how many things you can find that are similar. If you can't do this, watch a youtube video or read a book and learn a little bit more about different faiths.</p> <p>Invite a friend to come to church or a children's club at church with you.</p> <p>Make a photo collage about you and your faith</p>	<p>Do some weeding</p> <p>Plant some cress or a vegetable and watch them grow. When they are ready, share them with someone else.</p> <p>Plant a bulb or a sunflower in a pot and decorate the pot. Put it on your neighbour's doorstep secretly as a surprise gift.</p> <p>Pop some gloves on and see how much litter you can pick up in fifteen minutes</p>	<p>Sing a song loudly and enthusiastically with a friend or someone in your family</p> <p>Make an obstacle course then complete it with your leg tied to a friend's leg, or with one person being blindfold and following the other's instructions</p> <p>Say sorry to someone that you've hurt or fallen out with</p>
<b>Linked Bible Reading</b>	Acts 2: 46-47 They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God.	Acts 2: 44-45 All who believed were together and had all things in common, <sup>45</sup> they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds <sup>46</sup> to all, as any had need	1 Corinthians 9: 19-23 I kept my bearings in Christ — but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view.	Luke 6 : 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.	Acts 17:23a <sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.	Psalm 24: 1 The <b>earth</b> is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;	Romans 15: 6 <sup>5</sup> May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
<b>Date</b>							
<b>How did it go?</b>							





## Messy Church values (a reminder)

**Christ centred:** Messy Church is a church, not a craft club, that helps people encounter Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Messy Church is part of the Bible Reading Fellowship which believes with the historic churches, in one God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**All-age:** Messy Church is for adults and children to enjoy together. Every element should be relevant and accessible to all ages.

**Creativity:** Messy Church uses hands-on activities to explore Bible stories, to reflect a God of creativity and to give people a chance to play together.

**Hospitality:** Messy Church reflects a God of unconditional love and is a church for people outside church, providing an oasis of welcome and a safe space in which to thrive. Messy Church is about hospitality, expressed most evidently by eating together – whether it is a plate of sandwiches to share, or sausage and mash.

**Celebration:** Messy Church reflects a God of joy who wants his people to have life in all its fullness.

## Suggestions which could be used in a Messy Church or similar setting

### God's Beautiful World

In the beginning everything was dark.

God said: 'Let there be light.' God made the sun for the day, and the gentler moon for the night.

Then God separated out land, sea and sky, and filled them with animals, fish and birds.

God made first man and woman, and every plant and tree and was pleased with what he had done.

Then he rested on the seventh day.

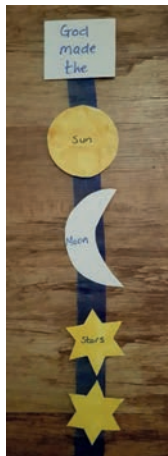
### Create

#### Sun moon and stars mobile

You will need: card shapes of sun, moon and stars or templates to draw round, paint or colouring pens, ribbon and double-sided tape.

Colour in the shapes. Place them on the ribbon and stick them on with double sided tape.

Talk about how God commanded the sun to shine on the earth and light to appear in the sky to separate day from night (Genesis 1:14-19).



#### Thank you placemat

Create your own placemat with lots of different pictures of God's beautiful world.

You will need: pictures of sea, animals, flowers, trees, mountains, rivers, insects, food etc, A4 card, glue, laminator and pouches.

Create a placemat by choosing lots of pictures of things you want to thank God for. Stick the pictures to the card and laminate. Talk about what you would like to say thank you to God for. When we come together to eat we can say thank you to God for the food we eat and for our families.

#### Marble people

You will need: shaving foam, paint and lolly sticks.

Cut out person shapes in card. Spread a layer of shaving foam on a plate or tray. Drop small amounts of different coloured paints into the foam and swirl with a stick. Place the card shape onto the foam and press gently. Lift carefully lift the template off from the shaving foam and you will have a multicoloured person. Talk about how each one will be a unique design just as God made us unique. Use Psalm 139: we are fearfully and wonderfully made.



#### World suncatchers

You will need: black card, green and blue tissue paper and sticky back clear plastic film.

Cut a circle of black card and then cut a second circle in the centre leaving a border approx 4-5cm. Place a circle of sticky back plastic behind the black circle leaving a sticky area ready to fill. Using cut up pieces of tissue paper in blue and green, fill the circle until the area is covered. Write around the edge



# Messy Church ideas

the verse from Psalm 8:16: How majestic is your name throughout the earth. Talk about how God looked at what he had made and saw that it was good. God created a wonderful world for us to live in and we can give praise and thanks for all that God has done for each of us.

## Pine cone bird feeders (BE AWARE OF ANY PEANUT ALLERGIES – RISK ASSESS PRIOR TO USE)

You will need: large open pine cones, unsalted peanut butter, twine/string and bird seed. Tie twine/string to the top of the pine cone. Spread the peanut butter onto the pine cone, coating each of the scales. Dip the pine cone into the bird seed until all the peanut butter is coated with seed. Talk about how God filled the earth with fish, animals and birds. We can show love for God's creatures by providing food for the birds to eat.



## Bug biscuits

You will need: Ritz crackers, pretzel sticks, cream cheese and chocolate chips. Cut the pretzel sticks in half to make the legs. Take one cracker and spread it with a thick layer of cream cheese. Lay four legs on each side, making sure they are pressed into the cheese filling. Place a second cracker on top. For the eyes, put two blobs of cream cheese on the top cracker and place a chocolate chip flat side up into the centre of the cheese. Talk about how God created all living creatures, from the smallest to the biggest, and that each creature has a part to play in God's creation, even the bugs!



## For the very young

Using a pop up tent, create a dark space by covering the tent with blankets. Provide torches or glow sticks and fairy lights and let the children go from light to dark.

## Celebration

Tell the creation story. Lucy Moore has an excellent book called *Colourful creation*. The Godly Play creation story is also available to download from [www.salvationarmy.org.uk/files/godlyplay-thecreationstorypdf/download?token=j3Kh-qCz](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/files/godlyplay-thecreationstorypdf/download?token=j3Kh-qCz). Alternatively, tell the story using a story bag (see [www.flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/2012/10/telling-creation-story-genesis-1.html](http://www.flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/2012/10/telling-creation-story-genesis-1.html).)

## Action Psalm 8 (Use Makaton signs or actions to go with this.)

O Lord, our God,  
Everyone can see  
how amazing you are!  
When I think about how huge the sky is,  
about the moon and the stars which you made  
and put into place,  
I wonder why you care about  
people like us!

But you do, and you've given  
us humans special honour.  
You've put us in charge of your whole creation:  
over all the flocks and herds of animals  
over all the birds in the sky,  
over all the fish and creatures in the sea.  
O Lord, our God,  
everyone can see how amazing you are!

## Prayer activity – globe prayer

Using an inflatable globe, throw it around the room. Shout 'stop' and each time you stop, pray for the different parts of the world and some of the different issues that there are around the world. Think about injustice, poverty, war, hunger etc.

## Pray

God of all creation, thank you for the wonderful things you have made.  
Thank you for the universe, full of stars and planets. Thank you for our world, full of life.  
Thank you for making each one of us. Thank you for loving each one of us.  
Help us to remember to love and look after all that you have made.  
May the God of all creation continue to work among us,  
blessing us as we work for the coming of the kingdom,  
in the name of the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and in the power of the Spirit. Amen



# Outdoor worship



## Barefoot walk

One way to feel more connected to the earth is to take off our shoes and socks and feel the physical connection through our feet as we walk. Check the surrounding area for possible hazards (broken glass, dog poo etc). Have water and towels for cleaning feet prepared. If possible, use a space with a number of different textures (eg the beach with sand, stones, grass, water; a park with paths, grass, earth, mulch; or a wood with roots, paths, leaves etc). Encourage everyone to be brave! Invite them to slowly and carefully walk on the earth barefoot, allowing their feet to feel the ground. Explore the different textures. Wiggle toes, make footprints.



You can create an indoors version by filling large trays with different natural materials (sand, earth, small stones, bark, leaves, even a piece of turf) and inviting people to walk barefoot on them. Allow time for people to experience a number of different trays and be prepared for queues!

## Read the story of the burning bush

Why do you think God tells Moses to take off his shoes? What difference does being barefooted make to encountering God?

## Read the parable of the sower

Think about the four different types of earth the seed falls on and how that feels to our feet. What does good ground feel like? How can we help the ground to be good so it will grow the seed well?

## Say the Lord's prayer together

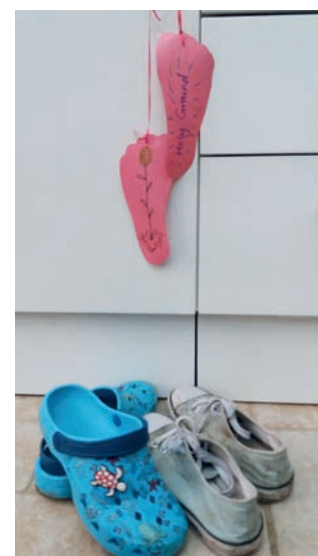
How does it change our experience of praying 'on earth' when we can feel the earth beneath our toes?

## Nature craft

Encourage everyone to collect any type of seed they can find (without damaging plants – only pick one if there are plenty) e.g. flowering grasses, flower seed heads, tree seeds and nuts. Use a roll of lining paper as the background and together create a picture using the seeds to illustrate the parable of the sower. Use glue if you want to keep it and display it somewhere, otherwise just place the seeds and take a photo of the picture. Then you can scatter the seeds around the area.

## Footprints

Stand on paper. Draw round your bare feet and cut the shapes out. Write 'Holy Ground' on one and 'Good Soil' on the other. Make a hole in the heels and attach them together with ribbon. Take them home and hang them up somewhere where you take off your shoes, to remind you to pray.

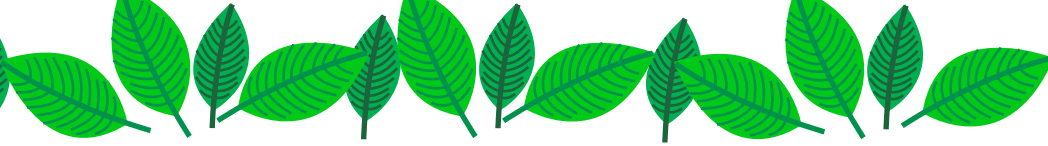


## Shared earth

Discover which other living creatures we share this outdoor space with. Encourage everyone to sit or lie down outside. Help people to focus.

- Look up at the sky and tree branches above you. What living things do you see? (Birds, insects, squirrels.)
- Look down at the ground. What living things do you see? (Birds, insects, worms, slugs, snails.)
- If people can't see living things, what evidence can they see of others that share this space with us? (Nests, worm casts, holes, nibbled plants, footprints, feathers, poo.)





## Read the story of Noah's ark

Talk about how God carefully rescued all the birds and animals who needed land and, once the flood water had gone, set them free to share the land with Noah's family.

## Sing 'All Things Bright and Beautiful'

- What creatures great and small that God has made do we share our space with here?
- What can we do to enable all these creatures to share the earth with people?
- What could we do right now and right here?
- What could we do together as a church?
- What could we do in our homes and gardens?



## Encourage everyone to identify with a particular creature

Thank God for the intricacy, beauty, and variety of his creation. Encourage everyone to name their creature within the prayer (perhaps going round in a circle).

## Encourage people to offer short prayers for their creature, their gifts and their needs

Eg 'we pray for worms – thank you for the work they do in making new soil from dead plants; please protect them from chemicals that poison the ground. Amen'. 'We pray for blackbirds – thank you for their lovely songs; please help them build safe nests where they can look after their eggs. Amen.'

If people have engaged with a particular creature, encourage them to go away and find out more about its life and how we could help ensure it has a good habitat to thrive. How could they become a champion for that creature in their family/school/street/community/area? There are lots of organisations that can help with this – just Google!

## Build a 'hide' or den (if appropriate)

Create a place where people can be quiet, hidden from view, and watch for birds and animals. This requires some patience! A good location might be near a pond or river, near a tree, in some woods. You could ask people to bring binoculars. You can create an indoor version of this by a window that looks out onto an appropriate outdoor space. You could encourage animal and bird visitors by providing appropriate food and water, ensuring access, and planting to create habitats.

## Nature craft

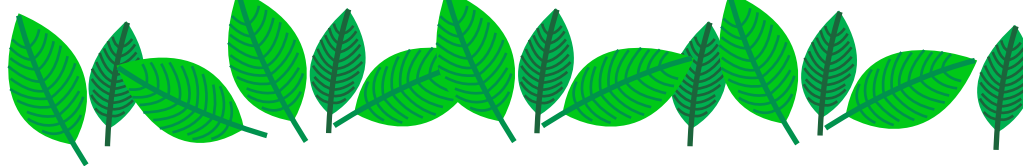
Using a roll of lining paper, ink pads and Sharpies (have a means of cleaning hands ready!) encourage everyone to make a collage of the creatures you have discovered sharing this place: use fingerprints (for smaller insects etc) or handprints to make images of the creatures and their environment. You could prepare a simple background picture for the creatures to inhabit.



## Pledge cards

Create simple bookmarks or postcards which say 'I will champion ..... and help them share the world with us'. Encourage everyone to make a fingerprint or handprint image of their chosen creature and fill in its name, then to sign the card and take it home to stick on the fridge/in their room, or to use as a bookmark to remind them.

# Preparing to lead worship



## Preparing for all ages worship

The theme of common ground gives us an opportunity to explore how worship might itself offer a gathering place which embraces our differences within the love of God. Differences should not necessarily be put to one side or ignored. Rather we should explore the possibility of mutual enrichment through humble encounter with each other and the God who made us in all our diversity. Our differences might be visible or invisible and they may include age, ethnicity, gender or class, and be affected by differing abilities, opportunities, experiences and resources. Throw into the mix differences of opinion, ideology, theology and culture, and it is a wonder we ever manage to do anything together! Worship begins with gathering together in a shared place. We approach the common ground of the presence of God. Here, we are all children of God, equally in need of God's grace. Our differences are subsumed within our commonalities, and yet our differences enable us to give and receive, listen and share, challenge and learn – through appreciating another's experience of God to expand our own. Such common ground is holy ground.

So, leading others into worship involves inviting people to step into this holy ground together. Our worship is in this sense a 'burning bush'. It calls to us in the midst of daily life, to stop and wonder, to take off our outer protection and to approach the living God with vulnerable bare feet, to hear God's call on our lives, to receive God's promises, and to be sent as God's coworkers into the world, to tackle injustice. The miracle of the burning bush is that it is aflame without being consumed. Worship should fire us, renew our vision, refuel rather than empty, and certainly not reduce us to ashes! Above all, it should enable us to meet with the living God together. That does not mean everyone will find everything in all-age worship personally helpful. Our role as worship leaders is to enable everyone to be aware that any and every element of our time together can be holy ground for some of those present, and to engage with it respectfully out of love for each other. Indeed it can be very illuminating, and all-age fellowship building, to regularly ask a variety of people towards the end of a service when they have most deeply connected with God in your time together. The range of answers can be very surprising! We should not confuse holy ground with comfortable or safe space – we should expect it to be awe-inspiring, response-provoking and world-upending. Holy ground is where all are welcomed to worship together.

## Preparing children and young people to lead worship

Always remind them that this is not a performance and the congregation is not an audience. They are offering their best to God, whatever that might be, and encouraging everyone else to do the same. Remember to pray for and with them beforehand (and during!) Ask God to be with them and help them. Explain they are trying to help people get a little bit closer to God and respond to his love. Perhaps ask them about when they have felt close to God, how they can notice if someone else is responding to God's love in worship, how they think they might be able to help other people stay in God's presence throughout the service. The best way to lead others into worship is to be worshipping yourself!

Worship is something we do together because it is easier to become aware of God's presence with us when we are with others doing the same (where two or three are gathered together in his name, Jesus promises to be in the midst, or middle, of that gathering (see Matt 18:20.) We all bring different aspects to that worship (a song, a verse from the Bible, a concern, a word of encouragement, finances, a prayer and so on.) It is important to recognise and honour everyone's contribution, whether or not it looks like worship to us (think of Mary pouring perfume on Jesus' feet, John 12:3, or the children shouting out in excitement as Jesus enters Jerusalem, Matt 21:14-16). Expect them to bring insight and understanding that only children and young people could bring (Luke 10:21).

Worship is something we do together because God tells us to (Psalm 150, Revelation 5:13) and because it helps grow bonds of love between us as sisters and brothers of our Heavenly Father (1 John 3:1). We are sharing intimate moments. We are seeing each other at our most vulnerable, in the presence of God, confessing and rejoicing, weeping and laughing. We are sharing our common ground and discovering life in all its fullness together. Worship helps build community, and therefore should help us love each other. Enabling children and young people to lead us in worship will enable us to experience different aspects of our life together as a worshipping community, and different dimensions of our loving God and Saviour. It can be a little taste of heaven (Isaiah 11:6), promised common ground!



Pilots is the non-uniformed organisation offered and supported by the United Reformed Church. Pilots companies provide activities, games and challenges to suit all ages and abilities. To a local church, Pilots can be a mission resource, offering children and young people a safe place for self discovery, faith development and an opportunity to find and respond to God. URC's General Assembly encourages all local churches to celebrate Pilots Sunday, on any Sunday of their choice in June each year, irrespective of whether they have Pilots company or not. This pull-out section includes suggestions and ideas which could be used prior to such a service and to aid in the preparation for it. You can read more about Pilots online at: [www.urc.org.uk/pilots](http://www.urc.org.uk/pilots)

## Pilots worship – common ground

And Jesus said: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' *Matthew 22:39*

**'Sometimes God's message is compatible with our culture; often it challenges our culture. But we hear both its affirmations and its challenges most clearly when we understand it in the language of our day.'** *Dr Craig Keener, New Testament professor*

### Common ground games:

We have selected a number of games for use over the four sessions. Please pick and choose the games most suited to your group, or look at the Compass for more ideas. These games can be played at any point during the session.

### Two truths, one lie

Each person tells the group three things about themselves. Two of these things must be true and one must be a lie. The group then tries to decide which of the three is the lie.

### Silent interviews

Split the group into pairs, preferably not friendship pairs. Explain that the challenge is to tell your partner three things about yourself – eg your hobbies, brothers and sisters, likes and dislikes etc – without speaking or writing anything down. You can only mime. After a few minutes, gather the group together and get each partner to introduce the other partner and tell what they've learned about them.

### Where do you stand?

Have Pilots sort themselves into groups based on their opinions on simple topics. For instance, ask Pilots to split into 'favourite toothpaste' groups. Pilots might sort themselves into 'Crest', 'Colgate' and 'Don't care' groups. Try asking about house pets (cats, dogs, fish, none), pizza toppings, favourite colours etc. This can also be used to split Pilots into groups for a game: just keep asking new questions until you have the number and size of groups you want.

### Love your neighbour (from the Compass page 99)

Everyone sits in a circle, one player in the middle, no extra chairs. The player in the middle asks someone in the circle 'Do you love your neighbour?' If the player says 'Yes, I love my neighbour'; the two people on either side have to switch places and the player in the middle tries to steal one of their seats. However, the player may say, 'No, I only love ... people wearing white socks, people with brown hair, etc' all the people matching the description have to change chairs. The one in the centre must try to sit on one of the movers' chairs. Whoever is left without a chair becomes the person in the middle.

### Values

Present the group with a value statement related to the theme of the event. Ask them to arrange themselves in a line from those who strongly agree to those who strongly disagree. Encourage discussion so each person is in the right place in line. Count off by twos for diverse groups or divide in half for more homogeneous groups.







## Session one: common ground in our Church

Church is a gathering of people with the common ground of belief. This session looks at the feeding of the 5,000, Matthew 14:13-21.

### Opening prayer

**Pilot Captain/group leader:** All aboard

*All aboard:* Group come together in a moment of quiet;

**Captain:** Jesus said come to me.

**Pilots:** We come in the name of the Lord.

**Captain:** Jesus made us a promise that he will be with us always, do we have a promise for him?

**Pilots:** I will learn pray serve, all I can, with the worldwide church of Jesus Christ.

### Introduce the theme of common ground

What is common ground? The dictionary describes common ground as opinions or interests shared by each of two or more parties. ‘Artists from different cultural backgrounds found common ground’. If two people or groups find common ground, they agree about something, especially when they do not agree about other things.

### Bible reading: Matthew 14:13-21, Supper for the 5,000

When Jesus got the news, he slipped away by boat to an out-of-the-way place by himself. But unsuccessfully—someone saw him and the word got around. Soon, a lot of people from the nearby villages walked around the lake to where he was. When he saw them coming, he was overcome with pity and healed their sick. Toward evening the disciples approached him. ‘We’re out in the country and it’s getting late. Dismiss the people so they can go to the villages and get some supper.’ But Jesus said, ‘There is no need to dismiss them. You give them supper.’ ‘All we have are five loaves of bread and two fish,’ they said. Jesus said, ‘Bring them here.’ Then he had the people sit on the grass. He took the five loaves and two fish, lifted his face to heaven in prayer, blessed, broke, and gave the bread to the disciples. The disciples then gave the food to the congregation. They all ate their fill. They gathered 12 baskets of leftovers. About 5,000 were fed.

*The Message © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H Peterson*

### Activities/crafts

#### Banner building

During the four sessions you will create a banner from the Pilots’ learning each week. Your banner can be made out of paper or cloth. The table below gives you an idea of how to make your banner. Please add drawings, photos, facts, or collage (let your imagination run wild) to document what you have been doing. The banner will be used as a focal point in the Pilots Sunday service.

#### Common Ground in ...

our church (craft/thoughts/ideas)	our community (craft/thoughts/ideas)	our country (craft/thoughts/ideas)	our world (craft/thoughts/ideas)

#### Basket weaving

‘They gathered 12 baskets of leftovers.’ Make a woven basket. Draw loaves and fishes onto small pebbles to place into your basket to remind you of the times we come together as a community in church. Resources needed: Basket weaving kits (see [www.bakerross.co.uk/basket-weaving-kits](http://www.bakerross.co.uk/basket-weaving-kits)), pebbles (seven per person) and permanent markers or paint to decorate.

#### Bread making

Using your favourite bread dough recipe, or a bread dough mix, make bread rolls together. Share them among the group.



## Faith adventure

Why do you think the large crowd stayed listening to Jesus, even when they were hungry? This session looks at the common ground of coming together in faith and eating together. Discuss how food and conversation brings people together. Make a list of these times.

## Prayer

Teach the Pilots 'Here is the church and here is the steeple'. Church is not the building, church is the people. And we don't have to be in a special building to be God's people and share together. The people in the Bible were in the open air. One thing we share as church is the Lord's Prayer. Jesus taught people the prayer and it is used all round the world. This is one prayer we will use in the Pilots Sunday service. Say it together. It may help to have it printed out for the Pilots to read if they don't already know it. Perhaps they could try to learn the prayer, or bits of it, ready for the service. Maybe choose a more confident speaker to lead it during the service. Perhaps the group could learn the Makaton signs for the Lords' Prayer (see [www.makaton.org/shop/shopping/downloadDetails/The-Lords-Prayer](http://www.makaton.org/shop/shopping/downloadDetails/The-Lords-Prayer).) Remember to check which version the church uses or, if you want to use a different version, make sure copies are available for the congregation to join in.

## Session two: common ground in our community

Community is built on good relationships, for example with schools and local charities. This session's Bible reading is Matthew 25:31-46

### Opening and Pilots prayer (see session one)

#### **Bible reading: Matthew 25:31-43, The Sheep and the Goats**

'When he finally arrives, blazing in beauty and all his angels with him, the Son of Man will take his place on his glorious throne. Then all the nations will be arranged before him and he will sort the people out, much as a shepherd sorts out sheep and goats, putting sheep to his right and goats to his left.'

'Then the King will say to those on his right: 'Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. And here's why:

I was hungry and you fed me,  
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,  
I was homeless and you gave me a room,  
I was shivering and you gave me clothes,  
I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me.'

'Then those 'sheep' are going to say: 'Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?' Then the King will say: 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me – you did it to me.'

'Then he will turn to the 'goats,' the ones on his left, and say: 'Get out, worthless goats! You're good for nothing but the fires of hell. And why? Because – I was hungry and you gave me no meal, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was homeless and you gave me no bed, I was shivering and you gave me no clothes, Sick and in prison, and you never visited.'

*The Message © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H Peterson*

## Faith adventure

Think about how you could present this Bible reading in a church service. Could you act it out or illustrate it in some way? Jesus would like us to see people as if they were himself, and to help them when and where we can. This session looks at charitable acts. What does this mean for you? What does this mean for your



community? Find out what charities your church supports, either in your community or abroad, and examine some leaflets about charities and support groups in your local area. Talk about which ones seem more important, ones you feel you want to do something about. Discuss ways of supporting these charities and initiatives and think of whether, as Pilots, you could do something to raise money, perhaps making cakes and selling them after the Pilots Sunday service. Make some awareness-raising posters to be displayed around your church. If appropriate, ask someone to come along and talk to your Pilots company about the church's mission statement.

## Banner building

Select one of the posters to put onto the banner, or stick some of the leaflets on. What could you add to this section of the banner to illustrate what you have been learning about in this session?

## Prayer

If you have a member of your group who is confident in writing prayers, encourage them to write a sorry prayer, write one together as a group. Alternatively, use this one:

We thank you, God, that we are all part of one community. Jesus taught us that you want us to see you in everyone we meet and to treat others how we would like to be treated. We are sorry for when we don't do that and we ignore people who need our help and our friendship. Forgive us when we are able to do the right thing but choose not to. Help us to become more like you and to do whatever we can to make our community a happy and safe place to live and grow. Amen

## Session three: common ground in our country

This session looks at what 'country' means, using Galatians 3:28. It reminds us of the reality that we are not all equal. Equality looks different in different countries.

### Opening and Pilots prayer (see session one)

#### **Bible reading: Galatians 3:28-29, In Christ's Family**

**28-29 In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ. Also, since you are Christ's family, then you are Abraham's famous 'descendant,' heirs according to the covenant promises.**

*The Message © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H Peterson*

## Activities

### Trading trainers

This game is available to download from [www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/trading-trainers-game](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/trading-trainers-game). A simpler version is available on page 107 of the Compass, under 'shoe factories'.

### Faith adventure

Use the Trading Trainers/Compass game to discuss equality, how does it make us feel when we either have all the resources or very few resources? Even if we all started with the same resources, what could make the game unequal?

Encourage the Pilots to look at the labels in their clothes. It may say what material the fabric is made from and how to take care of it. Does it tell you where it was made? What does that tell you about where the item was sewn together or where the cloth was made? What countries does it mention? What do we notice about those countries? Do we think everyone in those countries gets a fair deal, especially if our T-shirts are cheap ones? What might influence how much money someone has to live on?







## Craft

Using the template online at [www.pixabay.com/vectors/shoe-sneaker-trainer-white-gray-308566](http://www.pixabay.com/vectors/shoe-sneaker-trainer-white-gray-308566), use crayons or felt pens to design a trainer to raise awareness of fair trading/sharing/equality. Fruit of the Loom produce reasonably priced fairly traded white T-shirts. Pilots could use fabric pens to design a T-shirt based on the one-world theme or raising awareness of fair trading/sharing/equality. They could wear their T-shirts during the Pilots Sunday service and maybe a couple could explain their choice of design.

## Banner building

Choose a trainer design or take a photo of someone wearing their T-shirt to put on the banner. What other information might you choose to put on there?

## Prayer

Loving God, not everyone gets a fair share of the world's resources and not everyone gets fair pay for the work they do. This is true in our own country, where some people work very hard for very little pay and don't even earn enough to live safely or eat properly. It is true overseas too, and people in Britain make things worse when they want everything they buy to be as cheap as possible. We pray that you will help us be a voice for people who don't get a fair deal, and guide us to share what we have with others. Amen

## Session four: common ground in our world

What steps can we take to help our environment? This session looks at our world, the climate crisis/ stewardship and creation. It mentions Greta Thunberg and Eco Church.

### Opening and Pilots prayer (see session one)

#### Bible reading: Genesis 1:26-30, Heaven and Earth

God spoke: 'Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, And, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.' God created human beings; He created them godlike, Reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female. God blessed them: 'Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth.' Then God said: 'I've given you every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth and every kind of fruit-bearing tree, given them to you for food. To all animals and all birds, everything that moves and breathes, I give whatever grows out of the ground for food.' And there it was.

*The Message © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H Peterson*

## Activity

Make a collage for the banner using recycled materials. What picture can you make? Can you make the Pilots' badge?

## Faith adventure

This session talks about creation and how God expects us to be responsible in the way that we care for all living things.

- Greta Thunberg began striking from school on her own, to raise awareness of the ever increasing threat of climate change. What do you know/find out about her?
- How can we as individuals, Pilots, church or community help to care for the environment?
- Is your church an Eco-Congregation (Scotland) or Eco Church (England and Wales)? Visit [urc.org.uk/about-us/caring-for-creation1.html](http://urc.org.uk/about-us/caring-for-creation1.html) which includes a video from Youth Assembly.
- Do a survey of your church and see what evidence there is of their sense of responsibility for the environment. Talk about what changes the church could make and write a polite letter to the church Elders to say how important it is to you that the church thinks about the environment and being an Eco-Congregation. End your letter with some ideas about how Pilots could help. Visit: [www.ecocongregation.org](http://www.ecocongregation.org) and [www.ecocongregationscotland.org](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org).





## Banner

Finish the banner from previous weeks if necessary.

## Prayer

Encourage the Pilots to write a blessing for the end of the service. Think about what message you would like people to take home with them from what you have learned about common ground and incorporate this into the blessing. Use the blessing as your closing prayer for this session.

## Pilots Sunday order of service

- Reception of Pilots flag
- Welcome and call to worship
- All aboard and Pilots prayer
- Hymn: 'Let Us Build A House Where Love Can Dwell'
- Opening prayer
- Sorry prayer
- Expression of forgiveness
- Hymn: 'Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You'
- Bible reading
- Talk/sermon: Exploring the common ground in our Scripture readings
- Hymn: 'Christ Be Our Light (Longing For Light)'
- Activity: Pilots explain and explore the banner with the congregation
- Please prayers (prayers of intercession)
- The Lord's Prayer
- Hymn: 'I Am The Church, You Are The Church'
- Sending out/blessing

Written by Mick Smerdon (Pilots Captain/SPO), Mathew Henderson (Pilots leader) and Susan Henderson (from Nairn United Reformed Church Pilots)



Friends On Faith Adventures (FOFA) is the new children's offer from Pilots and the United Reformed Church Children's and Youth Work team, aimed primarily at children in the five to 11 age range. It is designed to work as a new standalone group for children or to complement existing work such as Messy Church, Holiday Club or an all-age service. It comes with setup instructions, forms to use and off-the-peg detailed session plans. Email [pilots@urc.org.uk](mailto:pilots@urc.org.uk) to find out more.



### Welcome (parents and carers asked to stay until after the Pilots Prayer)

Welcome back to Friends On Faith Adventures. We are looking forward to going on a journey and nobody knows where we will end up. All we know is we have got our crate filled with adventure and an open path ahead. So, hold on tight and enjoy the ride!!

## THE PILOTS PRAYER

LORD HELP US TO BE:

PREPARED FOR ADVENTURE

IN ALL WE DO.

LOVING AND CARING,

OPEN TO OTHERS

TOGETHER AS ONE COMMUNITY

SHARING THE LOVE OF JESUS ON OUR WAY.

AMEN



### Fun together

Game one: Label each wall of the room north, south, east or west. When the leader shouts 'north', all the children have to run to the north side of the room, hold their tummies and cry "Ho, ho ho!" (Like Father Christmas in Lapland). When the leader shouts 'south', they run to south and waddle like a penguin. When the leader shouts 'west', they run to west and hop, shouting 'there's a snake in my boots' (Like Woody the cowboy in Toy Story). When the leader shouts 'east', they run to the east and do a sand dance like figures in an Egyptian painting. When the leader shouts 'common ground', they run to the centre and sit down, holding hands. The last one there is out and goes to help the leader spot who's out. Children could also be out if they run to the wrong side or do the wrong action.

### Today's theme is the story of how our earth came to be

Required in the bag: globe, torch, watering can or water spray, plant in plant pot, apple or bag of flour, toy bird, tin of sardines or similar, toy animal and stars (glow in the dark ones or card cutouts.)



### Big Story: In the Beginning (Genesis 1)

**Reader one:** So today we going to think about how the world began.

**Reader two:** Oh, I have read all about that. That's nothing new. There was a big bang and suddenly everything was there and there were dinosaurs and things ...

**Reader one:** Well, sort of. When people were writing the Bible they wanted everyone to know that God was the reason that the world was made. That God made everything happen, and things followed a pattern over time. They made a story of creation to help us understand that.

**Reader two:** I see. Was it like junk modelling? Was he allowed to use the glue gun?

**Reader one:** I think God did it a bit differently to the way we create things, though I think God made us creative too.

**Reader two:** You mean like we get things from our parents? My nose is the same shape as my dad's, you know. Yes, big noses run in our family. *(takes out tissue and blows nose)*

**Reader one:** Enough of the bad jokes! We're going to need someone to be God.

*Choose a volunteer to play God*

**Reader two:** They don't look very godlike! Shouldn't they have a cloud to stand on? Or a halo or a long grey beard or something?

**Reader one:** Not this time – we don't know what God looks like but it's not likely that God's an old man on a cloud with a long beard. So *child's name* looks as much like God as anybody does.

**Reader two:** Ok let's go ... first God made the world *(Gives the child a globe to hold)*

**Reader one:** Wind back a bit *(takes back the globe)*. You're going too fast. First of all God created light and dark. He called the light day and the dark night.

*Reader two takes a torch out of the bag. Turns it on and off several times, saying: 'Day time, night time. Day time, night time.'* *Reader one takes the torch firmly off Reader two and turns it off, gives it to God)*

**Reader one:** God saw the light and dark and said it was good. *(Gets God to do a thumbs-up or high five and say 'Good job!')*

**Reader two:** So, what next?

**Reader one:** Then there was just water, so God separated it so that some was all over the earth and some was suspended above it to make the sky.

**Reader two:** And some of it fell from the sky to the sea as rain? *(Takes small watering can or spray from the bag and allows a small amount of water to fall over the children listening to the story)*

**Reader one:** Well, yes. God created the weather too. But there was nobody to get wet at that point. God saw the sea and the sky and said it was good. *(Gets God to do a thumbs up or high five and say 'Good job!'. Put the watering can/spray bottle by God's feet)*

**Reader two:** So we've got day and night, sea and sky, but there's nowhere for people to live yet – does God put them all on Noah's Ark?

**Reader one:** No. That's a different story – it comes later in the Bible. The next thing God did was to push the sea back and reveal the land underneath it.

**Reader two:** Bet it was a bit soggy! *(To God)* Get ready for the mud, mate!

**Reader one:** It probably was at first but will have dried quickly and been a good place for things to grow. *(Gives God the globe to hold)* And that gave God the next idea – plants and trees. All sorts of plants and trees and flowers and things. And lots of them good to eat, too.

**Reader two:** Like chocolate?

**Reader one:** Hmm ... well, like the cocoa beans that would later be used to make chocolate, I guess. But things like fruit, and grains to make flour.

**Reader two:** What was the point of that? There was nobody to eat them!

**Reader one:** God knew there soon would be. That was the plan – get everything ready first. *(Reader two takes a small plant and puts it at God's feet and a bag of flour or an apple to put in God's hand.)* God saw the land and the plantlife and said it was good. *(Gets God to do a thumbs up or high five and say 'Good job!')*

**Reader two:** Night and day, sea, sky and land, and plants. It must be time for the dinosaurs next!

**Reader one:** No animals yet. God noticed it was still a bit dark in the sky so created the sun, the moon and the stars to brighten things up a bit. *(Gives God some star shapes to hold)* God saw the sun, moon and stars and said it was good. *(Gets God to do a thumbs up or high five and say 'Good job!')*

**Reader two:** Dino....

**Reader one:** You have to be patient. God is getting the earth ready for us. He's not going to do it all at once. Next on the agenda were the creatures of the sea and the birds of the sky. God's hands were pretty full making those. Just think how many different things were made.

**Reader two:** Goodness, yes. Fish, cuttlefish, sharks, octopus, dolphins, herons, butterflies, parrots, pterodactyls ... *(Gives God a toy bird or butterfly and a tin of sardines)*

**Reader one:** God saw the sea and sky full of living things and said it was good. *(Gets God to do a thumbs up or high five and say 'Good job!')*

**Reader two:** Come on, come on. The suspense is killing me. What next?

**Reader one:** You'll be happy now. God knew the world was ready so the next phase of creation was to fill the land with living creatures too. And my, what an assortment of creatures God made. Too many to count. Insects and animals, reptiles and mammals, all things bright and beautiful ...

**Reader two:** And slugs and snails too? All creatures creepy and crawly?

**Reader one:** Yes, even slugs and snails. *(Gives God a toy animal)* And then God thought – who's going to look after all this?

**Reader two:** We're going to need a gardener? Or a zoo keeper? Definitely someone really responsible ... Better not ask me to do it!

**Reader one:** That's right! God created humankind, a man and a woman, for them and their children to be his special friends and to take care of the world forever. And that includes you and me. God saw the animals and the people God had created and said it was very good. *(Gets God to do a thumbs up or high five and say 'Good job!')*

**Reader two:** Wow, that's amazing. I wonder whether God still thinks everything is good?

### Creative adventure

Decorate a biodegradable plant pot with stickers or foam shapes and a sticky label saying 'God made the earth for us to share'. Plant a sunflower seed in it.

### Wondering questions to use during creative time

I wonder what we could do to take care of our planet ... I wonder which thing God enjoyed making best ... I wonder whether we're like God in any other way than being creative ...

### Walking the Way challenge

Reuse or recycle something you've used instead of just throwing it away.

### Adventurers GO!

So today we have learned about how God had a plan, created the world and was pleased with it. And how God created humans to enjoy and look after the world. Perhaps we could take better care of the world we share.

### Prayer

Thank you, creator God, for all the good things you have given us. For day and night, sea and sky, the land we live on, plants to make it beautiful and to give us food to eat, and all living things. We have so much and we are sorry that sometimes we forget that and take it for granted. Help us to see the beauty of our world and do all we can to keep it safe and clean and healthy. Help us to share all these good things fairly. Amen

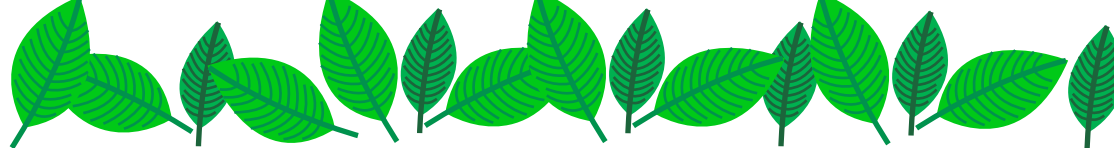
### Alternative prayer

Make a prayer tree by putting branches into a plant pot. Give each child a leaf shape cut out of paper with a hole punched at the top and a ribbon threaded through. Children should draw on one side something in the world they want to say thank you for and on the other side write or draw something to represent a promise to God about sharing or protecting these things by thinking about our environment. In turn, tie the leaf on the tree and say: 'All you make is good'.

### End prayer for every session: all together

We are Friends On Faith Adventures, travelling together with God.  
Adventurers go! Amen

# Uniformed organisations



## Parade service

### Welcome

Presentation of flags/colours

### Worship

#### Prayer

Father, we have gathered together today to give thanks for your goodness, to consider how we might relate to others, and to pray for others. We give thanks for your promise that where two or three are gathered in your name, you will be present. Be with us now as we worship you. Amen

#### Prayer of confession

Introduce the prayer by saying: *When we meet together, we think about times in the week when we may not have reacted how God wants us to. We may have been angry, frustrated, or done something we shouldn't. But we know that if we say sorry to God he will forgive us.* Ask the congregation to think of the things that they may have done or said this week and to clench their fists as if holding them tightly in their hands. Now say to them: *'As you pray, think about the things you are holding onto, and when the words 'Let go' are said, open up your hands and let go of all of those things.'*

Prayer: *Father God, we know we have done things we should not have, and we are sorry. [Pause] Help us to let go of all these things and hand them to you. Forgive us and help us as we try to do better this week. [Pause] Thank you for forgiving us and giving us peace, that peace which no one can completely understand but that lives in our hearts. Amen*

### Worship

#### Reading

1 Corinthians 9: 16-23. Try to use a child-friendly text like the International Children's Bible, or from *God's Word My Voice* by Lyn Zill Briggs. Ask one of the groups to provide a reader or readers.

#### Activity and talk

Introduction: Our theme is common ground, and today's reading looks at how Paul encourages us to find out what common ground we have with others before we share our faith. Paul mentions meeting people where they are, even learning another language to be able to talk to them.

Ask the congregation who speaks other languages, and how hard the language was to learn. Challenge them to find someone who they don't know in church today who has something in common with them. It may be a birthday, a name, that they were in Scouts, Guides, Boys' Brigade etc, or went to the same school. When they have found someone, get them to sit with them and then ask them to find out something else they have in common, maybe a favourite story or food or music. When they have got to know each other, ask them to then share who their favourite bible character is. Bring them back together and ask some of them to share what they found out – both adults and children. Say you hope this shows how it is easier to talk to someone when you are finding out what they have in common. It is important to realise we all can find something that we have in common with others and finding that enables us to then become friendly to share stories and our faith. We can find common ground. We can live in harmony.

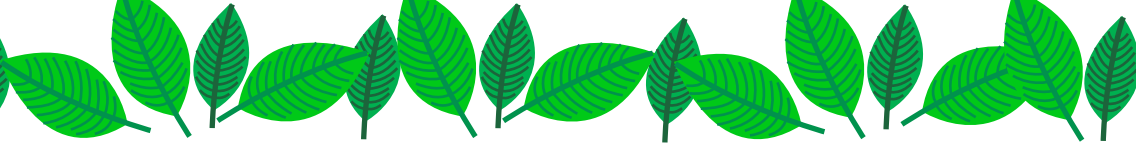
#### Prayers

Say prayers of intercession for others in the world, for the local community, for the sick and those who are bereaved. Perhaps ask the uniformed groups to prepare some prayers and ask them to lead the church in prayer.

### Worship/collect flags

#### Blessing





## Candles around the world

**Setting:** One large candle (preferably multicoloured). Place it in the middle of the table.  
Six smaller candles (preferably in different colours. You can also use different shapes.)  
Place these around the table.

**Action:** Light the six smaller candles as the following are read ...  
I light this candle in friendship for all people who are older or younger, taller or shorter or richer or poorer than me.  
I light this candle in friendship for all people who worship differently to me.  
I light this candle in friendship for all people of a different nationality or ethnic group to me.  
I light this candle in friendship for all people who are a different colour to me.  
I light this candle in friendship with all my brother/sister scouts/guides around the world.  
I light this candle for me, for I am unique and special.  
This final candle is different from the rest; it's unique just as we are all unique. We are all different and yet, like this candle, we all glow from the inside. Cherish the fact that underneath we are all the same but on the outside we are all different!  
Watch the flames closely. Notice the light from each candle is the same, even though the outside of each candle is different. So too, are all of us in the world.  
We wear different clothes, speak different languages, follow different religions or beliefs, like different foods, sing different songs. Yet we all belong to the same human race.  
Inside, we are all the same. We all wish to be recognised; we all wish to be called by name; we all wish for friends; we all wish for peace.

## Creation – reflection

- This can be done as a spoken exercise or by recording on a flip chart
- Get members of the group to name something they consider to be part of the wonder of creation
- Think now of the times we spoil creation, causing damage to the environment
- How can we do things differently?

**Everyone please say together: In the spirit of international understanding, we pledge ourselves to world friendship.**  
**In the spirit of international understanding, we pledge ourselves to peacekeeping.**  
**In the spirit of international understanding, we pledge ourselves to accept the challenge to 'look wider still'.**  
**We will all stand and renew our promise.**

## Prayer

God, when we go out and about, we see the wonder of your creation. The trees of the forest are standing strong and solid, their roots spreading across the ground. Other trees have delicate blossoms some of which will later become fruit on the tree. Birds are perched in the trees singing so many different songs and tiny spiders are spinning their beautiful webs. This is all your design. Please forgive us for times when we spoil your creation and help us to take care of your world. Amen

## Problem solving – reflection

- We have been trying to solve problems, some were easier than others
- To find solutions we have had to work together and to listen to one another
- Sometimes we have not been very good at this because we were set on our own ideas and we are sorry
- With each problem we knew there was an answer or method to solve the problem and this often made us work closer together.

## Prayer

Loving God, we know that sometimes there will be difficult situations in our lives. We pray that in these situations you will be with us and help us though sometimes it may take time to find good solutions, and these may not be what we wanted or expected. Amen

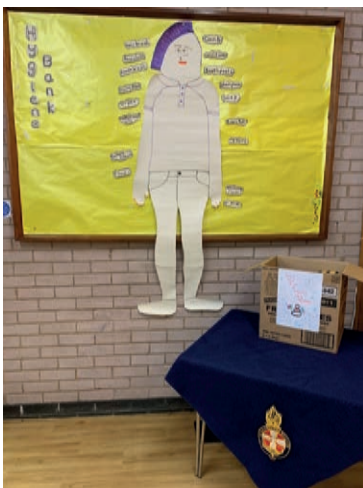
# Uniformed organisations



Sala Ya Bwana  
 Babu Yetu  
 Uliye mbinguni  
 Jina lako litukuzwe  
 Uflame wako uje  
 Mapeni yako yatimizwe  
 Hapa duniani Kama  
 huko mbinguni  
 Utupe leo riziki yetu  
 Utusamehe makosa yetu  
 Kama sisi tunavyosamehe  
 Waliotukosa  
 Usitutie majaribuni  
 Lakina utuoke na yule mwovu  
 Kwa kuwa uflame ni  
 wako na nguva na utukufu  
 Hata milele. Amin

*Prayer of Lord  
 Father our  
 who are in heaven  
 name your may it be praised  
 kingdom your may it come  
 wishes your may they be completed  
 here on earth as  
 there in heaven  
 may they give us today our needs  
 May you forgive sins our  
 as we do forgive them  
 who sin against us  
 may you not put us to testings  
 but may you save us from the evil one  
 for to be kingdom is yours  
 and power and holiness  
 until forever. Amen*

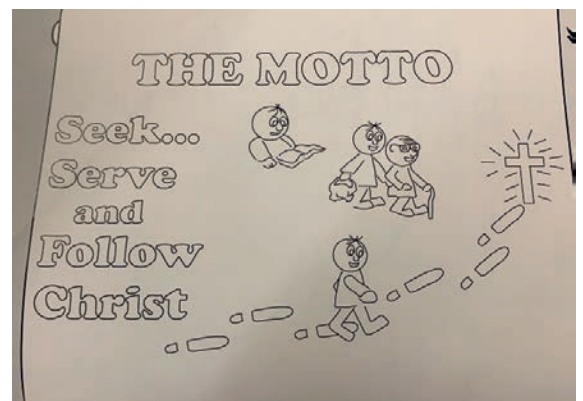
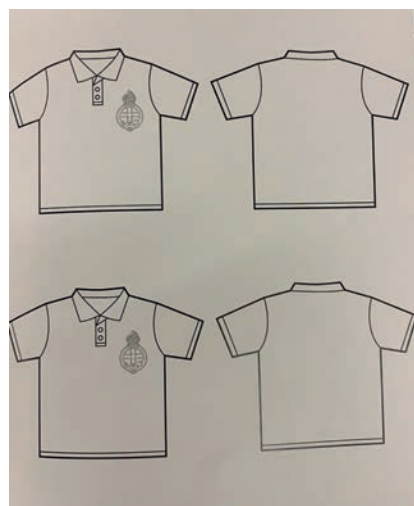
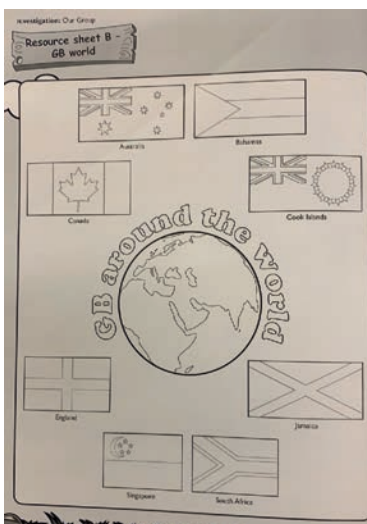
The old Boys' Brigade programme gave members the opportunity to learn the Lord's Prayer in Swahili. Perhaps you could try.

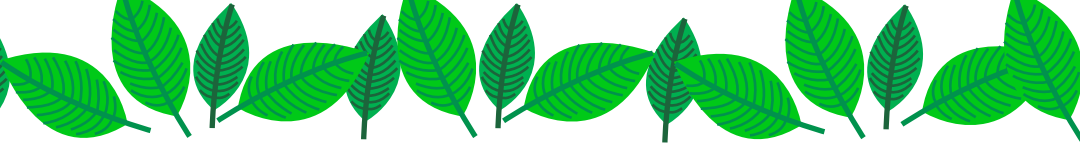


12th Stoke-on-Trent Girls' Brigade chose to support a local hygiene bank as these basic needs are common to all. Perhaps your company could find a charity to support that enables people to cater for a common basic need such as food, shelter, clean water etc. These basic needs are our common ground.



Uniformed organisations are part of worldwide movements and companies can be encouraged to explore the way that this common ground is expressed in different countries, maybe even by making contact with a company overseas via internet to find out what they have in common. Even making contact with a company in another part of the UK can provide an opportunity to celebrate the things you have in common and learn from the things you do differently.





# Spoken word, prayers and poems

God of all,  
 Help us to see the divine spark in everyone we encounter;  
 from those closest to us to those furthest away;  
 from those who affirm our views to those who criticize them.  
 With your help, may we break down the barriers we set up against people.  
 Whether they be race, religion, sexuality, appearance, speech or occupation.  
 Support us as we work for the common good of all people,  
 and seek to bring your kingdom to earth.  
 Amen

God, soften our hearts so we are moved to develop relationships with those who see things differently than the way we do: in politics, in faith, in culture. May we be open to seeking out relationships with those “different” in thought and practice, so we don’t isolate ourselves from any of your people. Amen  
*Sojourners, 12 July 2011 (www.sojo.net/articles/prayer-day-common-ground-0)*

**Mother God,**  
 Christianity teaches us to ‘Do to others what you want them to do to you.’  
 Judaism teaches us to ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’.  
 Islam teaches us to ‘Pay, Oh Children of Adam, as you would love to be paid, and be just as you would love to have justice!’  
 Hinduism teaches us that ‘Those acts that you consider good when done to you, do those to others, none else.’  
 Buddhism teaches us ‘Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.’  
 Father God, write the golden rule on my heart and help me to see the image of God in everyone I meet.  
 Amen

It is not you alone who pray,  
 or we, or those others;  
 all things pray, and all things  
 pour forth their souls.

What are the clouds,  
 the rising and the setting  
 of the sun,  
 the soft radiance of the moon  
 and the gentleness of the night?

The heavens pray, the earth prays,  
 every creature and every living thing.  
 In all life, there is longing.  
 Creation is itself but a longing,  
 a kind of prayer to the Almighty.

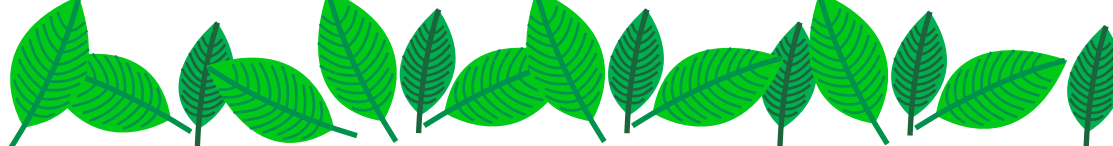
What are the flashes of the human mind  
 and the storms of the human heart?  
 They are all prayers –  
 the outpouring of  
 boundless longing for God.

*Michah Joseph Berdyczewski ‘It Is Not You Alone Who Pray’, translated, by Rabbi Ivan Caine (Society Hill Synagogue, Philadelphia, PA). In Kol Haneshamah: Prayerbook for the Days of Awe (Elkins Park, PA.: The Reconstructionist Press, 1999).*

Eternal God,  
 Break down my preconceptions, prejudices and petty judgements.  
 Help me to reconstruct my view of humanity.  
 Help me to realise that people are more than the clothes they wear, or the way they talk, or the faith they hold or the political views they spout.  
 They are not the labels I give them. They are human beings.  
 We are human beings.  
 A collective. A shared humanity.  
 Forgive me when I reduce your creation to a caricature.  
 May I see people as you see them.  
 A loved creation. Amen



# Spoken word, prayers and poems



## Preschool prayer

God made you  
And God made me  
Let's be the best that we can be  
God loves you  
And God loves me  
Shine God's love for all to see

## 'Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I'll meet you there.'

*From a poem by Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī,  
C17th Poet*

[LEADER] Lord, when we have taken your creation  
for granted;

### [ALL] Forgive us, gracious Father.

When we have abused its resources and polluted  
its purity;

### Forgive us, gracious Father.

When we have not fulfilled our calling to steward  
your earth;

### Forgive us, gracious Father.

*[Invite the congregation to silently receive God's forgiveness.]*

May we work with you in the renewal of creation;

### Empower us, Holy Spirit

May we speak and act for the good of your planet.

### Inspire us, Jesus Christ.

May we value and share the good gifts you provide;

### Encourage us, Father of creation. Amen.

*Sam Hargreaves, EngageWorship [www.engageworship.org/ideas/environment-confession](http://www.engageworship.org/ideas/environment-confession)*

He did not say: have lots of meetings, by this shall the world know you are my disciples. Neither did he say: keep records of each other's wrongs or; focus on the differences you have. Instead he said: Love one another. Be patient with each other. Do your best to listen and understand. Be merciful and work for peace. By this shall everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

© Dave Hopwood/engageworship.org

Eternal God, Creator of the universe, there is no God but you.  
Great and wonderful are your works, wondrous are your ways.  
Thank you for the many splendoured variety of your creation.  
Thank you for the many ways we affirm your presence and purpose,  
and the freedom to do so.

Forgive our violation of your creation.

Forgive our violence toward each other.

We stand in awe and gratitude for your persistent love  
for each and all of your children:

Christian, Jew, Muslim,  
as well as those with other faiths.

Grant to all and our leaders attributes of the strong;  
mutual respect in words and deed,  
restraint in the exercise of power, and  
the will for peace with justice, for all.

Eternal God, Creator of the universe, there is no God but you. Amen

## The Blessing

Touch your eyes with your hands and say:

Bless my eyes, Lord, that I may see more clearly.

Touch your mouth with your hands and say:

Bless my mouth, Lord, that I may speak of your truth.

Touch your ears with your hands and say:

Bless my ears, Lord, that I may hear my own words,  
thoughts and feelings, and those of every  
person near me.

Touch your heart with your hands and say:

Bless my heart, Lord, that I may be open to friendship  
and love.

Touch your feet with your hands and say:

Bless my feet, Lord, that I might walk the way ahead  
with courage and love.

Touch God's word (a Bible) with your hands and say:

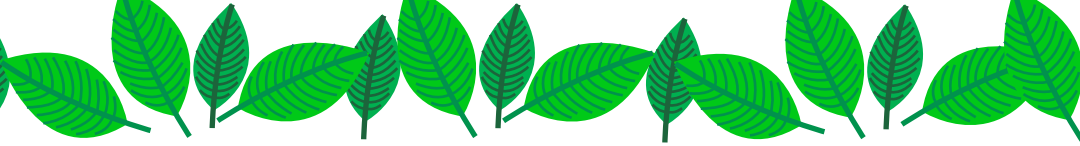
Bless your word, Lord, the good news, which is a  
compass for my way.

Touch your friends about you and say:

Bless me, Lord, and bless us all, we are your children.  
Amen

*Prayer for Peace by Christian,  
Jewish and Muslim clergy, 1  
January 1991 [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/prayer-for-peace-by-christian-](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/prayer-for-peace-by-christian-)*

[www.poemhunter.com](http://www.poemhunter.com) has  
excellent and moving poems on  
the theme of common ground.  
We are unable to include them  
here due to copyright issues but  
include links to each individual  
poem and encourage you to  
explore them. For each poem we  
include the first line only.



## Common Ground

*Louis Rams*

Here we both stand on common ground  
Fighting for recognition when there's none to be found  
© L.RAMS [www.poemhunter.com/poem/  
common-ground-7](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/common-ground-7)

## The Common Ground....

*Ric Bastasa*

God even has to cover all skeletons  
with flesh and skin,  
[www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-common-ground](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-common-ground)

## Common Ground

*Charles Garcia*

I feel all problems can be worked out if we just consult,  
Copyright ©2004  
[www.poemhunter.com/poem/common-ground](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/common-ground)

## Common Ground

*Joy Powell*

Everyone has a deep heart need  
that cannot be fulfilled with doctrine or creed..  
[www.poemhunter.com/poem/common-ground-3](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/common-ground-3)

## Boots and Flip Flops

*Dave Hopwood*

On any given day you might see  
A couple walking side by side,  
One in flip flops one in boots,  
One overly warm,  
The other not so much,  
Different together,  
Similarly unique.  
One calm the other excitable,  
One likes Marmite the other says 'yuk!'  
Made to be together,  
Two worlds hand in hand,  
Designed to walk-banter-live-listen,  
Two worlds amongst a universe  
Of worlds,  
Viewpoints-preferences-experiences,  
Hurting and healed,  
Lost and searching,  
Alone with one another.  
On any given day you might see  
The wonder of a world  
Teeming with different people  
Who have so much in common.

## Find Common Ground

*Audrey Heller*

Instead, of trying to win an argument,  
Try to find, common ground!  
Make sure, what you're saying is,  
Solid and sound!  
[www.poemhunter.com/poem/  
find-common-ground](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/find-common-ground)

## Common Ground

Somewhere in the middle  
soon there must be found,  
a place of understanding  
a peaceful common ground.....  
[www.allpoetry.com/poem/5353416-  
Common-Ground-by-Frogzter](http://www.allpoetry.com/poem/5353416-Common-Ground-by-Frogzter)

## Common Ground

*Charles Reginald Simpson*

To hold a tiny baby  
That moments past was born.  
[www.poemhunter.com/poem/common-  
ground-4/ Common Ground](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/common-ground-4/Common-Ground)

## So Similar

*Dave Hopwood*

A narrator reads the narrative in bold, a group of  
children do the actions in italics after each line.

**We all have so much in common –**

*High five each other*

**We are sometimes happy**

*Put on big smiles*

**Sometimes sad**

*Look sad and wipe a tear away*

**We worry about things**

*Look worried*

**We get excited about things**

*All cheer*

**We feel bored**

*All yawn*

**We sleep**

*Tilt head to one side on your hands and snore*

**We wake up**

*Jump up in the air, wide awake*

**We move around**

*Run around in a small circle*

**We stand still**

*All freeze and hold different positions*

**We are all different and yet we are so similar too**

*High five each other again and cheer*



## Videos

- The YouTube channel 'Jubilee' run a series called 'Middle Ground' where they get people with opposing views to engage in dialogue. These videos are a great tool to prompt discussion.  
[www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBVNJo7nhINRqe300-hRKYESCFPTOPTKrB](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBVNJo7nhINRqe300-hRKYESCFPTOPTKrB)
- Ted Talk: How to disagree productively and find common ground | Julia Dhar  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=phgjouv0BUA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phgjouv0BUA)
- A Muslim girl and a Jewish girl's bold poetry slam on YouTube. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCUz2b050IE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCUz2b050IE)
- This black musician explains why he is friends with white supremacists [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pESEJNy\\_gYQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pESEJNy_gYQ)
- How to deradicalise a neo-Nazi - BBC News [www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1mTHh1XQTK](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1mTHh1XQTK)
- Titled: Pretty Bad Ways to Start a Conversation [www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMTsMwXCLAA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMTsMwXCLAA)
- Adam Ruins Everything: why proving someone wrong often backfires [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8NydsXI32ss](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8NydsXI32ss)
- 'I grew up in the Westboro Baptist Church. Here's why I left ...' [www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVV2Zk88beY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVV2Zk88beY)
- Still I Rise by Maya Angelou -- Creating Common Ground [www.youtube.com/watch?v=fthuqMaPe0Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fthuqMaPe0Y)



## Movies

These films are about people from different backgrounds working together to achieve a common purpose.

- *The Breakfast Club* (15)
- *Good Will Hunting* (15)
- *The Avengers* (12)
- *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (12)
- *Good Omens* (TV show)





**Sameboatmusic.com:** 'Together' and 'We're Singing A Thankful Song' – both from the 'We Are One' album  
'Just the Same' – from the 'one of a kind' album

## God in his love for us lent us this planet

*Fred Pratt Green, Rejoice and Sing 85*  
God in his love for us lent us this planet,  
gave it a purpose in time and in space:  
small as a spark from the fire of creation,  
cradle of life and the home of our race.

## Big Family of God

*Becky Drake, Elevation Kids*  
Some of us are big and tall  
Some of us are very small ...  
But God loves everyone he's made  
God loves each of us, in a special way ...

## Every blade of grass

*Judy Mackenzie-Dunn*  
Every blade of grass, every sunset sky,  
every starry night, every mountain high,  
Every single thing that your hands have made,

## A place at the table

*Shirley Erena Murray, Rejoice and Sing 685*  
For everyone born, a place at the table,  
for everyone born, clean water and bread,  
a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,  
for everyone born, a star overhead,

## He's got the whole world in his hands

*Keith Getty*  
He's got the whole world in his hands,  
He's got the whole world in his hands

## Let there be love shared among us

*Dave Bilbrough, Rejoice and Sing 477*  
Let there be love shared among us.  
Let there be love in our eyes.  
May now Your love sweep this nation.  
Cause us oh Lord to arise.

## Father I place into your hands

*Jenny Hewer, Rejoice and Sing 518*  
Father I place into your hands,  
the things I cannot do  
Father I place into your hands,  
the things that I've been through ...

## Bind us together

*Bob Gillman*  
Bind us together, Lord, bind us together  
With cords that cannot be broken

## Let us build a house where love can dwell

*Marty Haugen*  
Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can  
safely live  
... All are welcome in this place

## Come all you vagabonds

*Stuart Townsend*  
Come all you vagabonds, come all you 'don't belongs',  
winners and losers, come people like me ...  
Come to the feast, there is room at the table ...

## Welcome everybody

*Fischy music*  
Here we are together, now we can begin...  
gathering in this place

## We are your children

*Fischy music*  
You are the one who will call us ...  
you are our God.

## We're all together again

*Fischy music*  
We're all together again, we're here, we're here.

## We'll walk side by side

*Fischy music*

## Kum ba yah

Kum ba yah, my Lord ...  
someone's singing,  
someone's crying,  
someone's praying.



## Acts 10:9-16. New International Version

### Peter's Vision

<sup>9</sup>About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. <sup>10</sup>He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. <sup>11</sup>He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. <sup>12</sup>It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. <sup>13</sup>Then a voice told him, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.' <sup>14</sup>'Surely not, Lord!' Peter replied. 'I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.' <sup>15</sup>The voice spoke to him a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.' <sup>16</sup>This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

## Romans 15:4-6. The Message

<sup>3-6</sup>That's exactly what Jesus did. He didn't make it easy for himself by avoiding people's troubles, but waded right in and helped out. 'I took on the troubles of the troubled,' is the way Scripture puts it. Even if it was written in Scripture long ago, you can be sure it's written for us. God wants the combination of his steady, constant calling and warm, personal counsel in Scripture to come to characterise us, keeping us alert for whatever he will do next. May our dependably steady and warmly personal God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well as Jesus gets along with us all. Then we'll be a choir – not our voices only, but our very lives singing in harmony in a stunning anthem to the God and Father of our Master Jesus!

## Psalms 24. New International Version UK

### Of David. A psalm.

<sup>1</sup>The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;  
<sup>2</sup>for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.

## Jeremiah 17: 7-8. New Revised Standard Version

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.  
<sup>8</sup>They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream.

## Acts 2:44-47. The Message

<sup>43-45</sup>Everyone around was in awe – all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met. <sup>46-47</sup>They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

## 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. New Revised Standard Version

<sup>19</sup>For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. <sup>20</sup>To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. <sup>21</sup>To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. <sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. <sup>23</sup>I do it all for the sake of the Gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

## Acts 17:23-25. New Revised Standard Version

<sup>23</sup>For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, <sup>25</sup>nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.

# Bible journal

Today I chose to read:

What do I want to say to God?

Did anything bother me?  
What questions do I have?

Something new or  
surprising I noticed

What did I learn about loving God,  
loving others, loving myself?

What could I do now?

I want to remember

You could use this space to doodle

## Common ground Bible study

Rather than looking at one or two passages independently, this invites a group of young people to engage with a number of Bible passages with the task of discovering if there is any common ground in them. This process encourages young people to unearth bigger themes and understandings of God for themselves through a group exploratory process. This selection of passages all centre around people.

### Old Testament:

- Eve in the garden – Genesis 3:1-13
- Noah on the boat – Genesis 7:1-24
- Moses on holy ground – Exodus 3:1-6
- Jonah in the whale – Jonah 1:17-2:10
- Jeremiah in the cistern – Jeremiah 38:1-6

### New Testament:

- Jesus on the mount – Matthew 5:1-14
- Zaccheus up the tree – Luke 19:1-10
- Peter by the fire – Mark 14:66-72
- Jesus on the cross – Luke 23:26-43
- Mary at the tomb – John 20:1-18
- Thomas in the room – John 20:24-29

Divide the group into twos or threes and give each group an Old Testament and a New Testament passage to read and discuss. Give them as long as they need, but at least ten minutes. Stress that there is no rush, there are no right or wrong answers – encourage them to talk about what they hear, what they know and to listen to each other. Encourage them to say if they need help.

Questions about each text:

- What was the problem for this person? Why?
- What did they do/ what happened?
- Where was God?
- What common ground is there in this?

Collect feedback from the groups, and record their comments. Swap the texts around between groups and so that different Old and New Testament passages are now paired together (e.g. pass one to the left and one to the right). Repeat the discussion process and feedback. See what else arises. If you have time repeat the process a third time. Now ask the whole group what common ground they have found within these passages. What themes have emerged, how might they group the stories and people together, what have they discovered about God?

If they have found some common ground – how might 'standing' on that common ground:

- impact how they relate to each other?
- impact how they relate to others and the world?
- impact how they relate to God?
- lead them into worship?





## Reflections on common ground

Marie Aquilino

Is common ground a physical place

A terrain

A place with detail

Can I draw common ground the way I draw the orchids pouring out of their pots ...

[www.blog.problemwisdom.com/reflections-on-common-ground-e1d82333c257](http://www.blog.problemwisdom.com/reflections-on-common-ground-e1d82333c257)

## Praying for common ground at the Christmas dinner table

Reza Aslan

[www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/magazine/praying-for-common-ground-at-the-christmas-dinner-table.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/magazine/praying-for-common-ground-at-the-christmas-dinner-table.html)

## Preparing the ground (being more open to meeting new people)

Develop links with other groups of young people, from different churches, neighbourhoods, towns, countries, denominations, religions etc. in order to prepare for going out into the wider world.

Ideas can include:

- Working together on a community project eg litterpick, mural, gardening project
- Share a meal together. Consider dietary needs and as far as is practically possible, organise your meal around those of the group eg a vegetarian, gluten-free curry.
- Visiting other faith spaces and places of worship
- Organise a discussion on an issue of importance to young people of both communities. Encourage young people to both listen to and respect other people's points of view but to also disagree where appropriate. The goal is not to 'win a debate' but to more fully understand each other's point of view and to communicate your own clearly. Try to resist platitudes and go deeper in conversation. Perhaps have leaders or more confident young people from each group give a key talk of about ten minutes maximum and then invite discussion from the rest of the group.
- Role play: in pairs, take it in turns to act out meeting someone who you would not expect to get on with/might find it very difficult to get on with. Prompt cards for things to talk about might be:
  - a) How would you deal with difficult topics?
  - b) What if they were insulting or dismissive about something that was important to you or that you had strong views on?
  - c) Perhaps brainstorm things that are important to you (identity, issues, etc.) that might be points of difference between you and the other person.
  - d) Discussion: What do your responses tell you about yourself?
- Ideas for churches/groups as they look to equip and support young people who are moving away from home:
  - a) Care packages, including something to decorate your room with to remind you of friends and church back home.
  - b) Real responsibilities within the church – opportunities to develop life skills and time management
  - c) Guests and mentoring opportunities from students, graduates, young people in work. Share their experience plus Q&A. What is the best advice they can give for homeleavers?





## Common ground: where is it? Panel discussions (adapted from Youth Assembly 2020)

The idea behind the panel discussions is to enable young people to explore different opinions on a matter while also being able to find the common ground. You might like to invite people to be part of a small panel. Aim for a diversity of ages, experiences, and perspectives. Alternatively, you could ask members of the group to 'role play' a variety of people to make a panel. Give the panel members questions in advance to help them prepare brief and focussed responses. Chair the discussion by first asking the panel members the questions, and then giving the group time in buzz groups to discuss what they have heard. Ask the buzz groups to offer their perspectives on how to find common ground in these issues, and how that might be helpful. Invite the panel to respond. Questions for the panel on:

### Politics

- Why is politics so challenging?
- How do faith and politics interact?
- Can you talk about a time when your faith has been challenged by politics?
- Where do you see common ground in politics?

### Faith, sex and relationships

- What's the role of sex in relationships?
- Is sharing faith important in relationships?
- How does your relationship with God impact your other relationships?
- Where do you see common ground in faith, sex and relationships?

### War and peace

- Is it ever justifiable to go to war?
- Do you believe there will ever be world peace?
- Where is God in conflict?
- Can you talk about a time where you have tried to be a peacemaker?
- Where do you see common ground in war and peace?



### Practical ideas

There are many practical ways of putting faith into action around the theme of common ground.

- Try some guerrilla gardening: find a spot which looks as though it could do with brightening up, an area of waste ground etc. Then secretly tackle that area – clear it of rubbish and stones and weeds, cultivate the soil and plant flowers or vegetables. For ideas visit: [www.guerrillagardening.org](http://www.guerrillagardening.org)
- Go on a photowalk around your local area and take photographs of the signs of God's goodness in the environment. Use these to design a publicity poster or an art display which you could show at your local church or community centre.
- Think of the things all people need – food and drink, shelter, warmth, relationship, healthcare, clean water – and get actively involved in fundraising or start an awareness-raising campaign. Could you do gardening for an elderly person, twin a toilet, donate to a foodbank, volunteer at a dementia cafe, raise money for a charity etc.
- Could you encourage your church, school, college, or clubs to become more environmentally aware? Or to use only fairly traded produce? Perhaps they could be encouraged to seek endorsement for this.
- Eating together is a way of sharing common ground. Perhaps you could host a meal for a group in your community, or bake cakes to donate to a homeless shelter.
- Push yourself out of your comfort zone by going to worship in another church denomination than than your usual one. What could you can take from these different forms of worship to enrich your own faith? If possible, visit a different faith community.
- Write to your local MP to share concerns about issues affecting your local community or society as a whole.
- Organise a litter pick around your local area.





## Finding common ground – the Tower of Babel

A sketch on interdenominational unity © Susie Stead 2019

Cast: narrator, Jesus and five people

Props: Candle, prayer book, rosary/ Walking the Way prayer chord, cross. Also signs/posters/banners proclaiming: Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church, 'Baptist Union Declaration of Principle,' 'The Methodist Constitutional Practice and Discipline,' 'The Catechism of the Catholic Church' or other statements of faith from different traditions.

**Narrator:** 'Now the whole earth had one language and the same words ... and the people said to one another: 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.' (Genesis 11:1-4 NRSV)

*Five people come on stage/front of the church and gather in a semicircle.*

**A:** Look, we're all Christians together!

**B:** We all follow Christ, don't we?

**ALL:** YES!

**C:** Right! Let's get together and we'll build the one great true church that reaches to heaven!

**ALL:** YES!

**D:** It will be a great church!

**E:** Complete unity!

**A:** The church will be invincible, indestructible – like Noah's great ark floating on the floods.

**B:** Not even God will be able to sink this ship!

**Narrator:** The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. And the Lord said: 'Look, they are one people, and they have all one language ... nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech.' (Genesis 11:5-7 NRSV)

*Jesus stands centre back stage while Narrator speaks and then comes up and taps on someone's shoulder*

**Jesus:** Excuse me – so exactly how does the Trinity work?

**A:** Well we've agreed that that there's one God and three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**B:** That's right and the Son proceeds from the Father and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

**C:** No that's not right! The Spirit proceeds from the Father only.

**D:** I think you'll find I'm right!

**E:** No, I think you'll find ...

**Narrator:** Sometime later

*Several of the cast pick up signs/posters and wave them, to display their different statements of faith*

**A:** I think you'll find that I'm right.

**B:** No! I'm right.

**Narrator:** 'So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.' (Genesis 11:8)

**A:** Come and share the Lord's Supper

**B:** Come to the Mass

**C:** To the Eucharist

**D:** To our Agape meal

**E:** To Communion

*They look at each other bewildered.*

**A:** Sssh! Let us pray –

*All five adopt different ways of praying: One kneels, one prostrates themselves, one lights a candle, one gets a book out, one gets a rosary out or Walking the Way prayer cord, one prays in tongues (or other alternatives). A is standing with eyes shut. A peeks and sees everyone else doing something different.*

*A sighs*





- A:** STOP IT – We're all agreed and understand that the Bible is the word of God.  
**All:** YES!  
**A:** Every word is God's word and literally true.  
**B:** No, no, no! It's inspired by God but written by men.  
**C:** Exactly – what about the women?  
**D:** We must remain faithful to the King James version.  
**E:** We must modernise it so it is the word of God for our times.  
**A:** If God wanted to make the world in seven days, why not?  
**B:** We must understand it in its' historical context.  
**C:** God gave us minds; we should use them.

*Pause*

- A:** Let's try again shall we? The Bible clearly blah tells us – that women should obey their husbands blah blah ...  
**B:** There is no male or female blah, blah for all are one in Christ.  
**C:** That all of us have fallen short, blah of the glory of God.  
**D:** That blah divorce is wrong (*alternative possibility to say here: homosexuality/same sex relationships*)  
**E:** That promiscuity is blah wrong.  
**A:** That only men can be priests, blah blah blah Jesus, blah blah man.  
**B:** That no one should be priests blah blah we blah blahh all priests blah blah blah ...  
**All:** Blah, blah, blah, blah ...

*They all express frustration – put their fingers in their ears.*

**Narrator:** And so the people could not understand one another and they never did reach heaven.  
*Jesus steps forward to centre. It is very important that his tone carries authority but also great compassion.*

**Jesus:** Listen. I am the way. A new commandment I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

- A:** But how can I – he's wrong!  
**B:** He doesn't see.  
**C:** It quite clearly says in the Bible  
**D:** She will not agree with me!  
**E:** I keep telling her but will she listen?

**Jesus:** Love one another.

- A:** But it's so hard.  
**B:** Tell us who is right – should it be called Communion or the Lord's Supper?  
**C:** I can't stand guitars in church.  
**D:** I can't stand the old hymns.  
**E:** And as for the children ...

- A:** The old guard  
**B:** Young people today  
**C:** Traditionalists

**Jesus:** Love one another!

- A:** But they've hurt me.  
**B:** They disapprove of me.  
**C:** I feel excluded.  
**D:** My view doesn't seem to count.  
**E:** No one will listen to a word I say.

**Narrator:** 'He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.' (*Isaiah 53:3*)

**Jesus:** Love one another.

**All:** But it hurts ...

*Jesus puts his arms out in crucifix form. Again, he speaks with great compassion.*

**Jesus:** I know – (*pause*) Love one another.

May the GOD  
who gives YOU  
endurance AND  
encouragement  
give you the  
same Attitude  
of mind  
TOWARDS EACH other  
that Jesus Christ had



### Interfaith discussion

This is a resource aimed at bringing young adults from different faith perspectives together. Make contact local with faith communities in your area and bring young adults together for an evening. This could be done over a shared meal (be respectful of religious views on food eg a vegetarian meal would be preferable).

#### Discussion starter

- 1) Have each person choose a small item which they have brought with them (eg wallet, pen, coin etc).
- 2) Have each member pass their item on to the person on their right.
- 3) Take turns allowing each member to explain how they are similar to and different from the object. One statement for each.
- 4) Continue until everyone has tried each item or is bored.

#### Questions for discussion

- 1) Was it difficult to find similarities?
- 2) Which did you notice first: How the object was similar or different to you?
- 3) When have you found it hard to find similarities with someone? What happened?
- 4) What should our response be when we encounter someone different to us?
- 5) How would you want to be treated by others who feel you are different to them?



#### Read together

‘Do to others what you want them to do to you.’

Matthew 7:12 (Christianity)

‘You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your kinsfolk. Love your neighbour as yourself:

I am the Lord.’ Leviticus 19:18 (Judaism)

‘Pay, oh Children of Adam, as you would love to be paid, and be just as you would love to have justice!’

Qur’an 83:1-6 (Islam)

‘Those acts that you consider good when done to you, do those to others, none else.’

Taittiriya Upanishad. (Shikshavalli, Eleventh Anuvaka, Hinduism)

‘Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.’ Udanavarga 5:18 (Buddhism)

#### Questions for discussion

- 1) What do these sayings all have in common? The sayings are known as ‘the golden rule’. It is the principle of treating others as you would want to be treated. Discuss together what other beliefs, practices or shared experiences you might have in common.
- 2) Are there ways that you could work together as different faith communities? The hope is that work can begin together between different faith groups.

#### Prayer

Eternal God, Creator of the universe.

Great and wonderful are your works, wondrous are your ways.

Thank you for the many-splendoured variety of your creation.

Thank you for the many ways we affirm your presence and purpose, and the freedom to do so.

Forgive our violation of your creation.

Forgive our violence toward each other.

We stand in awe and gratitude for your persistent love for each and all of your children: Christian, Jew, Muslim, as well as those with other faiths.

Grant to all and our leaders attributes of the strong: mutual respect in words and deed,





restraint in the exercise of power, and the will for peace with justice, for all.

Eternal God, Creator of the universe, there is no God but you. Amen

*Authored by Christian, Jewish and Muslim clergy. Excerpted from Current Dialogue 24/93, page 36*

Posted online at [overcomingviolence.org](http://overcomingviolence.org)

## Human Library

Try this video as a discussion starter for over 18s: Heineken 'Worlds Apart'

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo2YF5n\\_D04](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo2YF5n_D04). See also: [www.humanlibrary.org](http://www.humanlibrary.org).

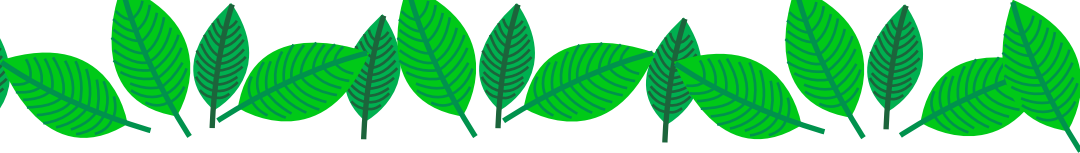
The Human Library 'works to create a safe framework for personal conversations that can help to challenge prejudice, yet aim to help rid discrimination, prevent conflicts and contribute to greater human cohesion across social, religious and ethnic divisions. We meet our goals by creating a special dialogue room, where taboo topics can be discussed openly and without condemnation. A place where people who would otherwise never talk find room for conversation.'

The platform's 'human books' are volunteer people representing different perspectives and life experiences. Human books make themselves available to talk to groups, sharing something of their life story, and are prepared to answer questions. The idea is to bring people face-to-face with those who are different from them in order to broaden perspectives, to allow space for reassessing opinions and to change minds if necessary. The Human Library is a registered trademark and shouldn't be used without permission. However, if you don't feel that inviting the Human Library to share with you is right for your group, here are some tips for organising your own event using the same principles.

- 1) Consider the life experiences of your young people. Where might they benefit from learning from somebody else's experiences? You might want to consider inviting people from different religions or sectarian backgrounds, other cultures, political perspectives, sexual orientations or gender backgrounds (including transgender people). Be conscious of the sensitivities of your group but don't be afraid to be controversial! The idea is to bring people face-to-face with those they might not normally see eye-to-eye with.
- 2) Invite people to be your human books. Think about contacts you have from both within and outside your group or church. Perhaps yourself or another leader or a parent, have a friend whom you respectfully disagree with? Do any group members want to share from their own experience?

Provide both your guests and the youth group with guidelines, to promote respect and mutual listening. We have included suggestions below.

- Listen respectfully, without interrupting
- Listen actively. Try to understand others' views and why they are important to them rather than simply planning what you're going to say next when they stop talking
- Only criticise ideas, not the people holding those opinions
- Commit to learning rather than debating. Comment in order to share information, not to persuade.
- Avoid using any inflammatory or offensive language
- Ensure that everyone has the chance to speak or share their views, with enough time to think about what they want to say
- Remember that people are individuals rather than representative of their faith, nationality, gender etc, so avoid generalisations. Remember that people's views are their own. Do not ask them to speak on behalf of their group. Avoid assuming anything about them on the basis of any generalisation or stereotyping.



**The People’s Supper – forward movement using the age-old practice of breaking bread**

‘We use shared meals to build trust and connection among people of different identities and perspectives. Our work is born of a belief – to quote a popular adage – that ‘change moves at the speed of trust’, and a simple question: What needs healing here? For millennia, sharing a meal has stood as one of the few things that all of us – whoever we are and wherever we come from – have in common. Suppers are a place where we can come together over one of humanity’s most ancient and simple rituals. A place where we can share meaningful stories, good food, and a sense of community. A place where we can build the relationships and trust on which our work depends.’

**‘The more you know about another person’s story, the less possible it is to see that person as your enemy ... When we share the sources of our pain with each other instead of hurling our convictions like rocks at “enemies”, we have a chance to open our hearts and connect across some of our greatest divides.’** *Parker Palmer, US activist*

**‘It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognise, accept and celebrate those differences.’** *Audre Lorde, US civil rights activist*

**‘Social change moves at the speed of relationships. Relationships move at the speed of trust.’** *The Revd Jennifer Bailey*

**‘I believe men hate each other because they fear each other and they fear each other because they don’t know each other. They don’t know each other because they don’t communicate with each other and they don’t communicate with each other because they are separate from one another.’** *Martin Luther King Jr*

**We agree:**

There’s a lot we may not agree on. In sitting down, we choose to agree on this:

- I will grant you welcome, and I thank you for the welcome you grant me
- I will show up, be present and be open to creating this experience together
- I will speak and listen with truth and love, agreeing or disagreeing with respect and kindness.

**An invitation to brave space, by Micky ScottBey Jones**

Together we will create brave space  
 Because there is no such thing as a ‘safe space’.  
 – We exist in the real world.  
 We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.  
 In this space,  
 We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world.  
 We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere.  
 We call each other to more truth and love. We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.  
 We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.  
 We will not be perfect.  
 This space will not be perfect.  
 It will not always be what we wish it to be.  
 But  
 It will be our brave space together,  
 and  
 We will work on it side by side.

See [www.thepeoplesupper.org/resources](http://www.thepeoplesupper.org/resources) for more resources





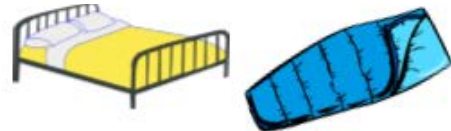


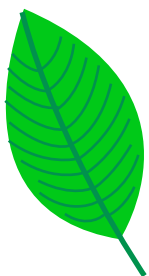
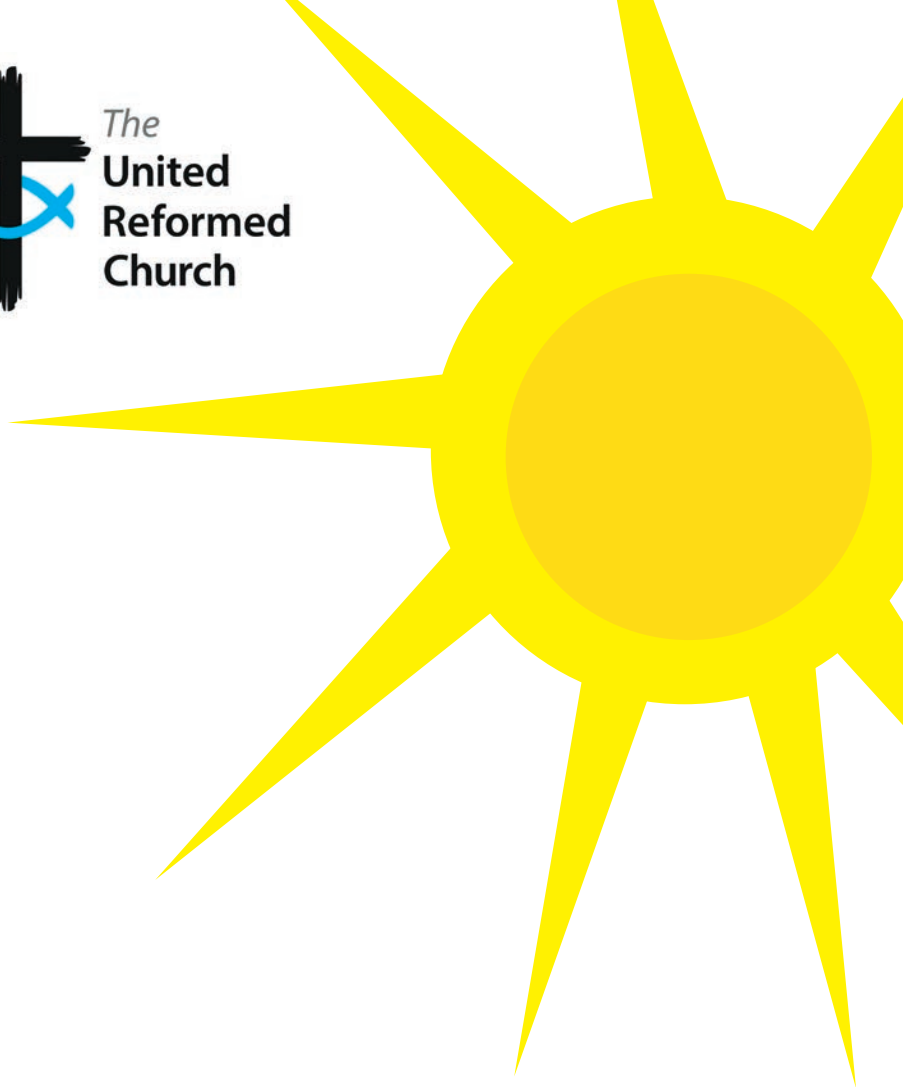
Using a Good News Bible, look up the following pairs of Bible verses. Read them closely and spot which word each pair has in common. When you have found all the answers, unjumble them to make a quote from the Bible.

Can you find where this Bible quote is from?

- 1) Exodus 16:14 and Psalm 126: 4
- 2) 1 Kings 3:26 and Luke 6: 27
- 3) Luke 9:20 and Psalm 63:3
- 4) Psalm 5:12 and Romans 11:3
- 5) Genesis 29:18 and Philippians 1:9
- 6) Proverbs 27:2 and Mark 15:30
- 7) Luke 10: 29 and Proverbs 25:9

What links these pairs of pictures? When you have found all the words, think about whether they have anything in common.





United Reformed Church Children's and Youth work  
86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT  
020 7916 8683 [www.urb.org.uk](http://www.urb.org.uk)

Follow us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/URCchildren.and.youth](http://www.facebook.com/URCchildren.and.youth)  
Sign up to our bi-monthly newsletter here: [www.bit.ly/CYWnewsletter](http://www.bit.ly/CYWnewsletter)