



SUPERSLEUTHS



***2021 URC CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH
WORK HOLIDAY CLUB MATERIAL***

WELCOME TO THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH CHILDREN'S AND HOLIDAY CLUB RESOURCES

Welcome to this, the first ever official United Reformed Church (URC) Children's and Youth Work (CYW) Holiday Club – Supersleuths. Tying in with our theme for the year, Heroes and Villains, we are taking you back in time to a 1950s detective agency, where our gallant detectives gather the clues to investigate the deeds of a gang of Bible characters called “The Disciples” and discover what really makes a true follower of Jesus.

This material is not designed to be prescriptive, although you may use it that way if you wish. Nor is it designed to be exclusive; feel free to swap and change the ideas included here for ones you think more suitable for your groups. It is written as a five-day plan, but you may decide to do a one-day extravaganza, a club once a week through the holidays, or maybe just select a couple of the sessions to do on two or three days in the week, especially if you need time to do a thorough clean in between sessions.

At the back of this resource, you will find several appendices. You may be thinking of adapting this material in a variety of ways, and the appendices will give you suggestions and ideas of how to do so for various different settings.

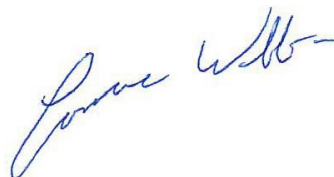
As this is our first venture of this kind, we would love some feedback. Do let us know what you found helpful, and if there is anything else you wish we had included. If we were to do another such resource next year, what would be most helpful to you? And do let us know how you use it – some pictures for our Facebook page would be greatly appreciated. Contact lorraine.webb@urc.org.uk or children.youth@urc.org.uk.



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IN THIS RESOURCE

Appendices: While the main resource is written with the five to 11 age range in mind, you may have some young people who are a little older or who come as junior helpers. The first appendix gives ideas for extending the material to take them a little deeper. You may have some children of pre-school age within your holiday club, so we have included an appendix on how to adapt the theme for little ones. You might be running a vintage holiday club and want the theme to tie in, and there is an appendix of ideas for the elderly and for those with dementia. Why not develop the holiday club as an intergenerational adventure, inviting adults and young people along, as well as children, to participate together? There is an appendix with some ideas for running an intergenerational event which may help in adapting these materials.

Overarching themes and activities: In the first section of this resource, there are some overarching themes and activities. Here, you will find ideas for decorating your hall or Zoom background, for making a magnifying glass puppet, and for ongoing/cumulative activities for your groups of children and adults. There are also the two songs which have been purpose-written for this material by Leo Roberts.

Reflections for volunteers: It is important for the volunteers running the holiday club to ground it in faith and sound theology, and to know where the theme is taking them. For this reason, we have included some initial reflections for the team to include in a daily pre-session briefing, with discussion points to stimulate their own thinking and learning, and a prayer.

Arrival activities: You will need something to keep your children busy from the moment they arrive until the holiday club session actually begins. These activities will take place in the team areas known as the Detective Dens, and are to encourage children to feel welcome and engaged,

and to start them thinking about the theme. They will be able to update their case files, as well as doing a challenge and creative activity engaging all learning styles.

Story: We have chosen to deliver the stories in a variety of styles, and encourage you to be experimental with different ways of presenting Bible stories. For those of you not confident with storytelling or drama, or for those of you running your holiday club over Zoom, there are videos of the stories being told by our team on our YouTube playlist, at bit.ly/3odY47V. There are also suggestions for YouTube videos you may wish to use to retell the story later in the session. These have been chosen because they tell the story in a way suitable for this age range, and are true to the Bible accounts.

Bible verse: There is also a focus on one Bible verse each day, which could be used as a memory verse.

Craft: These crafts are not prescriptive – you may substitute them with crafts of your own. We recommend checking Pinterest for ideas, or referring to past issues of Families on Faith Adventures at Home to stimulate your creative juices. These can be found at urc.org.uk/families-on-faith-adventures. Do try to use recycled or eco-friendly materials wherever possible. Craft time is a good time to talk – maybe use the reflective questions to prompt a conversation while you are engaging in the craft together, or ponder on what you have found out so far.

Games: One game is described here which has a link to the theme. You will undoubtedly want to include more games – probably some of the children's favourites.

Small group prayer activity: This is an opportunity for the small groups to pray together and to encourage a bit of creativity in prayer.



Prayer during this time can be far more personal, and encourage children and adults alike to build their personal relationship with God. Remember to allow time to listen and be still.

Recipes: We have suggested recipes and food activities that are themed to our days, and which are quick and easy for children to make themselves during the session, if you choose. If you are using them, it would be helpful to consider also serving fruit and a healthy drink. Alternative suggestions to cater for those with allergies are in brackets in the ingredients list. Please be aware of current local regulations about snacks – it may still be necessary to ask children and adults to bring their own snacks and not to share.

Drama: If you have made a magnifying glass puppet, this is the chance for it to take centre stage as it carries out its interrogation of the gang member. Again, these dramas are available on our YouTube playlist. If you choose to do the drama yourself, either dress someone up as the character being questioned, or use another puppet.

Song: You will want to include songs in your closing worship, and probably also through the session. One of our songs is about being a hero, while the other is a cumulative song with different verses to go with each of our Bible characters. You could sing just one verse and chorus for each session, or you could build it up by adding a verse on each time. Your church probably has additional songs which your children will enjoy – think about the lyrics and make sure they are appropriate for this age group, and theologically sound.

Closing prayer: The closing prayers are designed to be a little more active, and to allow everyone to get involved. Remember that prayer is for adults as well as children. This is not a time for the adults to go off and start tidying up! You might even want to encourage parents and carers to arrive slightly before the end of the holiday club session and join in the closing prayer with their children.

A typical holiday club might run like this:

Suggestions for a daily timetable 2 ½ hours

Arrivals – Detective Dens (10-15 mins)

Welcome to the small group
Getting to know each other (suggestions circle activities)
Arrival activities – group building and daily activity
Case file update (activities to download)

Detectives Briefing – Upfront Session 1 (45mins)

Active warm up (music and exercise routine)
Song/s
Meet MG, who will introduce the mini challenge
Mini Challenge (ideas to download)
Story
Memory verse

Detectives Investigate – Small groups (60mins)

Refreshments – recipe of the day
Crafts
Reflection
Prayer activity
Fieldwork – games

Detectives Update – Upfront session 2 (25 mins)

Song
MG interviews..... – Drama
Detective Den Update (interview the mini detectives)
Update the detectives board (what have we discovered so far?)
Closing song and group prayer activity

Detective Dens and Goodbye

Wind down, and gather up ready for collection from small group.



OVERARCHING THEMES AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE WHOLE WEEK

Each day, we will explore a different Bible character or characters who are suspected of being members of the infamous gang 'The Disciples'. We have offered a creative way to tell the story, as well as a link to a video, if preferred. The emphasis is to introduce elements of the Bible character for the day, and enable the children to truly investigate and bring their thoughts and ideas.

The idea is simply to explore and investigate each character, then at the end of the day make up their own minds what this person's character tells us about the gang they belong to. We all have a part to play in presenting the evidence and examining it together.

The personnel of the detective agency

- Holiday club leader is the boss of the detective agency, Supersleuths. This character could be called Sherlock Bones and could have a supporting lead called Dr Whatsit.
- A sidekick, who is a giant puppet in the shape of a magnifying glass, called MG. Remember that puppets can be very helpful in giving children information that you really want them to listen to, as well as being used as described in the activities for the day.
- Children are in detective teams investigating the members of a new gang on the block – the Disciples – to see what they can learn about them.
- Group identity/Detective Dens – designate one area of the hall for each detective team, and get the teams to come up with their own team name.

MG Introduction MG, or magnifying glass, is very keen to ask questions but not very good at giving answers, so always speaks in

questions. If you ask MG a question, they will answer, but always end with a question.

In the Detectives Briefing (upfront one), introduce MG to everyone. Each day, build up a short conversation, with MG asking questions about the day and a recap of the day before as the week progresses.

Ideas for making MG (the magnifying glass puppet)

Cut out a large circle with a handle – an old cardboard box painted black works well.

(a large frying pan makes an excellent template)

Cut a slightly smaller circle out of reflective paper to give the effect of the glass and then add eyes, nose and mouth. You can make the end of the mouth look like question marks which visually reminds of the magnifying glass's need always to ask questions.



Decorate your venue: The scene is set in a 1950s detective agency. You might want a desk and a chair with arms for your leader to sit at, an angle-poise lamp for interrogations, an old rotary-dial telephone, a coat-stand with a mac and detective hat hanging on it, a few cardboard files filled with papers hanging around, some wanted posters on the walls, and so on. We do not recommend you go for the smoke-filled atmosphere and nicotine-stained fingers, however!

Decorate each Detective Den: Set up a large investigation board for each small group. This could be a display board, a large whiteboard, or



even just a large piece of cardboard fastened to the wall. The children can be told in advance which story/character they will be exploring the next day, and come prepared to add evidence to the board, even before hearing the story of the day. What can they find out for themselves? What questions do they have, and what would they like to find out each day?

Draw pictures of the character, pin them to the board, and write words that you'd connect with that character. Add to it during each session. This board can be built up throughout the week, and older groups might like to find links between the stories and themes and join them with lines or string or ribbons. The big question of the day is, what do your investigations tell you about this member of the gang?

Make a detective arrival activity project for the whole week:

Cut out a cardboard head and shoulders (child-sized), and attach to a coat hanger. This gives you the frame to add a jacket or coat. Cut out some legs and a pair of shoes, and hang from the inside of the jacket or coat. Make a shirt front and tie using a large sheet of paper and any card or collage materials that you have. Make a hat and a disguise to add to the face.



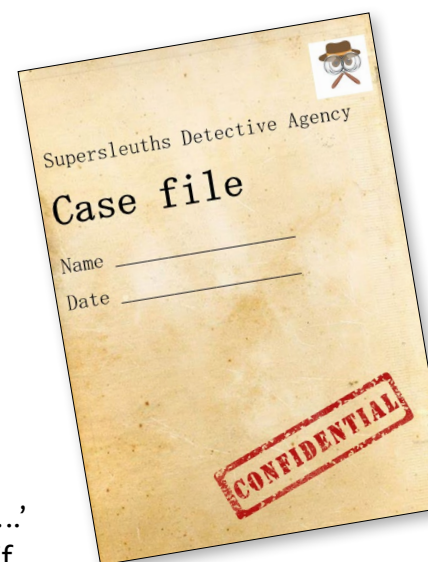
Each day, encourage the children to re-design the detective with a different disguise. This could involve changing the jacket, shirt and hat and glasses, or even making a wig from wool or strips of paper. The children will love the opportunity to create their own designs, and this is a project that they can think about when they go home. You can always have two or three detectives to add to your den.

Ongoing activities

Hotseat or Drama:

Each day you could offer a hotseat option: a chance to meet the character of the day and ask your planned questions to get more evidence. This would need a team member or a child who is prepared to take on the roles.

Alternatively, you could use the 'MG interrogates....' sketches (remember that if you don't feel comfortable doing this, you could use the videos with the puppet MG which are available in our Holiday Club playlist at bit.ly/3odY47V.)



Investigate Further: At the end of each session, when you have gained a bit more understanding of the characteristics of a disciple shown by that character, challenge the children and adults to find examples of that characteristic in others – maybe other Bible characters, maybe people they know, maybe people in the news or in a film or TV programme. Add those people to a heroes board in the Inspector's office – perhaps they too are members of the gang.

Continuing craft

Detective case file: decorate and create a file of evidence which will be built on each day. This would be best as a loose-leaf folder with plastic pockets. Put information you





Create a torch sheet: create a torch slider from card, and colour it to look like a torch.

Place a white piece of paper into a plastic folder and draw some clues to the Bible character onto the outside of the folder using black permanent marker pens. Remove the white sheet and replace it with a black one so that you can no longer see the images on the folder.

Slide the torch into the plastic folder on top of the black paper and see the part of the picture come into view.

Songs: You will find the sheet music at urc.org.uk/holiday-club

Sing along with Leo on Supersleuths by LeoRoberts soundcloud.com/leoroberts/supersleuths and Hero by LeoRoberts soundcloud.com/leoroberts/hero

have found out about each character into it, and build up your file as you investigate the characters throughout the week. Daily suggestions are given for case file activities.



Hero

A hero is somebody who stops things being bad,
A villain is the opposite and that is really sad.
So listen to me now and I will show you how,
You don't need a cape to be a hero.

Chorus

You don't need a cape to be a hero,
Or wear your underpants over your tights.
Just try to do some good, cos Jesus thinks you should,
No, you don't need a cape to be a hero.
You don't need to fly to be a hero,
Your feet they can stay firmly on the ground.
You can't fly like a bird, cos that would be absurd.
You don't need to fly to be a hero.

You don't need a mask to be a hero.
It doesn't matter folk know who you are
To undertake the task you don't need to wear a mask.
You don't need a mask to be a hero.
You don't need special clothes to be a hero.
Just wear the clothes that you wear every day.
I'm telling you the truth, you are not bulletproof,
You don't need special clothes to be a hero.
You don't need superpowers to be a hero.
For God has made you perfect as you are.
I don't think you oughta try to breathe while underwater.
You don't need superpowers to be a hero.

Words and music by Leo Roberts





Supersleuths

Hints are everywhere we look as we investigate
this book

We must search to see if we can find the truths
With a magnifying glass, and the right amount
of sass

We will be a group of modern supersleuths

Where you go, that's where I'll go, so said Ruth
And where you live, that's where I'll live, that's
the truth

I will take your God as my God, and your people
as my kin

For you love me and I love you

Our adventure must begin

There was Mary, there was Martha in their home
One was working, one was praying all alone
Both things needed to be done, but it doesn't
sound much fun

But they knew that very soon they would be
welcoming God's son

Timothy was really very young
At the time when his adventure just begun
And when he answered God's call, it was
helping his friend Paul
He showed courage and encouraged him
To share God's love with all

Esther lives in Persia, she's a Jew
And though scared she knew just what she had
to do
She gave Xerxes a request: please don't keep
my kin oppressed
Is she a hero or a villain? What d'you think,
what's your guess?

Abraham and Sarah were quite old
They could not have any children, they'd been
told
Ishmael did no wrong but then Isaac came along
Who's the hero, who's the villain in this song?

Words and music by Leo Roberts



ESSENTIAL THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Covid-safe: You will need to collect information for NHS Track & Trace or whatever is required in your area, and ensure that everyone is aware that anyone testing positive needs to tell the leaders, so they can inform those who have been in contact and instruct them to self-isolate. Ensure that everyone is aware that if they are showing any signs or symptoms of Covid-19, then they must stay at home.

If you have a larger number of children registered for your holiday club, you will need to organise them into small teams or bubbles. Try to keep children in these teams throughout the session and minimise mingling to keep your environment safe. You could mark out separate areas in your hall for different teams to sit. Also, try to have materials just for that team to use rather than sharing – maybe even individual packs.

Prepare all materials in advance, and allow these to stand for three days before using, minimising handling of materials.

Encourage children to wash and/or sanitise hands on arrival and departure, and before preparing food.

Check the current rules for your locality to be certain of numbers permitted and whether masks are needed for adults.

Keep the rooms you are using well ventilated. Remember to complete a Covid risk assessment for your holiday club, and have this checked and approved by your church leadership.

Online Holiday Club: You may have decided to do your holiday club over Zoom or a similar online platform. Much of the material here can also be done online, with children provided with a pack of resources to use during each session, although some of the games may need to be adapted. You can find examples of Zoom games on our website, [urc.org.uk/resources-](https://www.urchurch.org.uk/resources-for-children-and-youth)

[for-children-and-youth](https://www.urchurch.org.uk/resources-for-children-and-youth). It might be fun to dress up and/or to decorate your background.

Please make sure that your volunteers have all read the URC's online safety policy, which can be found at [urc.org.uk/images/safeguarding/GP5/Appendix_C_Model_church_online_safety_policy.pdf](https://www.urchurch.org.uk/images/safeguarding/GP5/Appendix_C_Model_church_online_safety_policy.pdf)

You can do small group activities online by using breakout rooms, but remember that you must have two adults who are DBS checked in each breakout room. You might also like to watch this helpful video from Ruth White to help you think about the pros and cons of online engagement with children: youtu.be/NzIzkG8-H4o.

Outdoors: You may have decided to run your holiday club outdoors. While some of this material is suitable for doing outdoors, you will need to enhance it with extra activities more appropriate for taking advantage of the outdoor space. Alternatively, you may have access to a marquee or large gazebo which you could use, or you could go outside for part of the session if you have the facilities for that. If you are using outside space, you will need to ensure that the area is clean and free from litter and animal faeces before and after your session, and you will also need to consider how you will ensure that children do not wander off from the area. You will need to think about safeguarding – how to ensure that no adults engage inappropriately with the children in your care, including those who are not on the team. You will also need to think about issues such as access to toilets.

Registration: It is important to keep an accurate register of the children and adults who attend on each day of your holiday club. This information will need to be kept according to your church's data protection and safeguarding policies.



Parents/carers must also fill in a registration/consent form, and children should not be accepted into the holiday club without it.

The registration/consent form must include: name and date of the event; child's details; details of two emergency contacts; details of any additional needs; any health needs, medication or allergies; acknowledgement of liability; consent for photographs; consent for first aid and emergency treatment; details of who will be collecting the child at the end of the session. Do not include any information which you do not actually need (eg gender).

Ensure that your registration/consent form states where parents/carers can access your data policy and safeguarding policy. These forms must be kept securely and used sensitively.

Sample registration forms are available at urc.org.uk/holiday-club

Safeguarding: Make sure you are familiar with your church's safeguarding policy, and that volunteers have received training. Everyone over the age of 18 who is taking part in your holiday club must have an enhanced DBS check for the church. Occasional visitors who do not have a DBS certificate must not be left alone with children, and the leadership of the club is responsible for ensuring that a leader is with them at all times. See the URC Good Practice 5 at urc.org.uk/good-practice-policy-and-procedures.

You may find that volunteers have children at the holiday club to whom they are related or have a close bond. They should be encouraged to remember not to treat those children any differently – hugs and kisses, sitting on laps or being alone with a child are fine at home, but not advisable in a church club situation.

Photographs: One or two people should be identified as designated photographers for the event, and should wear a badge identifying them as such. They should use a camera rather than

a smartphone to take photographs, and should only photograph those children whose parents have given permission. Photographs should not be used on any social media other than the church's or Church House official social media. See the URC Good Practice 5 for more information, at urc.org.uk/good-practice-policy-and-procedures.

Mobile phones: It is good practice that no mobile phones are brought into the holiday club area unless absolutely necessary.

Risk assessments: It is essential that you do a risk assessment for the venue you are using for your holiday club, and also to do risk assessments for the activities you will engage in. You must also do this for the precautions you will use to reduce the spread of Covid-19. Your church may have its own policy and template for risk assessments, but you may wish to use or adapt the ones available at urc.org.uk/holiday-club. Depending on the current situation with Covid-19, you may also wish your volunteers to complete a personal risk assessment. Risk assessments are useless if just put in a file. Ensure that all your volunteers have read the risk assessment or, better still, discuss it during your pre-session briefings. Please be aware that all risk assessments should be approved by your church leadership team.

Safety: Check the premises you use are safe, hygienic and suitable for children – think about stacked chairs, flooring, toilets and so on.

Children should not be allowed in kitchen areas unaccompanied.

Think about how to make your toilets a safe place without compromising privacy and dignity, so that you know when children have gone to the toilet and how long they have been gone. As far as this is possible, designate separate toilets for adults.

Have a routine for checking throughout the session that children have not gone missing from the group. Have a routine for the end of the session – perhaps tell the children that they are



superglued to the floor until their parent or carer comes to collect them – and then get the parent and child to come to a leader to be signed out.

Although it is not compulsory to have someone on the team who is a trained first aider, it is a very good idea. Make sure everyone on the team knows where the first aid box is, and nominate someone to ensure that the box is fully stocked. Have a first aid recording sheet or book, and keep clear and full records of any injury, however minor, who treated it, and what was done. Ensure that the record is dated and signed, and take note of anything that needs to be done to minimise risk of it happening again.

Behaviour: Remember that the children are at a club, and it should be fun for everyone. Do not impose rules that are not necessary, or enforce participation if the child feels uncomfortable. One member of the team should be the key person to speak to for any issues that arise, and this should be the only team member who liaises directly with parents or carers about behaviour. Remember that the best way of encouraging appropriate behaviour is to model it and to build positive relationships. You may want to watch the video on strategies to support behaviour that challenges which was prepared for leaders of our non-uniformed organisation, Pilots, and can be found at youtu.be/9XxpvUGVT_o. It is good to have a behaviour policy which all team members read, and which is available for parents. An example can be found at urc.org.uk/holiday-club. You may also want a simple code of conduct which all participants sign, an example of which can be found at urc.org.uk/holiday-club. It is helpful to have a short and punchy list of about five golden rules, framed positively ('we will' rather than 'we won't'), and which includes visual cues as well as words. This can be put up in each room and referred to whenever necessary.

Additional needs and inclusivity: All we do in our churches and fellowship should be as inclusive as we can possibly make it. Nobody should be excluded because of their background, ethnicity, physical or learning needs, gender, or for any other reason. Consider what adjustments may need to be made to enable all children to take part. You may find it helpful to watch the video on strategies to support additional needs that was prepared for leaders of our non-uniformed organisation, Pilots. You will find it at youtu.be/usZWfOfEhm8.

Timetable: Ensure that everyone is familiar with the timetable for the sessions. It is a good idea to establish a routine for your sessions, and stick with it as far as possible. It is also helpful to have a large-scale visual timetable for the session up where everyone can see it, maybe with smaller versions in any other rooms you use.

Debrief and review: Although you will be tired after an energetic session and want to clear up and go home as quickly as possible, it is good practice and helpful to have a daily debrief of how everything went, consider whether anything needs adapting for the next day, and capture positives and negatives for an overall evaluation of the holiday club. You might also like to include the children and their families in your evaluation.

Feedback: The writers of this resource would greatly appreciate any feedback on how your holiday club went, which parts of this document were useful to you, and whether there was anything additional that you needed. Please email children.youth@urc.org.uk. We would also love to see any photographs which you have the appropriate permissions to share with us.



RUTH: LOVING AND SUPPORTING

Team time topic talk

Many of us know the book of Ruth for the beautiful declaration of support she makes to her mother-in-law, Naomi, or the slight snicker at teenage youth group when we try to discuss what is meant by covering Boaz's feet.

But to me, this misses the real point of the story. Ruth is a Moabite, one of the traditional enemies of Israel who, out of love and concern for her mother-in-law, risks moving to a place where she is likely to suffer discrimination and poverty. At that time, Naomi, as a 'useless' widow without any men to define herself by, would find life very harsh indeed. Ruth's sacrifice of her own future to save her mother-in-law makes her the very model of someone who gives support and love, with little thought for herself.

Some commentators consider that the book of Ruth is about changing the story of one of Israel's traditional enemies. She is the good immigrant, the virtuous alien, almost a cipher of goodness to counteract the negative stories earlier in the Bible about the Moabites and their beginnings in Lot's drunken incest with his daughters.

Of course, this story has a happy ending. Ruth marries Boaz, and is doubly blessed with a son – a true sign of God's favour. Indeed, Ruth is so blessed that she is one of the four women in the genealogy of Jesus, and King David's great-grandmother.

- a) Who would we be willing to sacrifice everything for?
- b) What are the good and bad stories we tell about people we see as different to ourselves?
- c) The Bible has several stories along this theme – the most famous is the Good

Samaritan. What is God trying to tell us through these Biblical stories?

Take some time to pray together. No matter what we do in a holiday club, no matter how good the games and the craft, no matter how professional the acting and deep the message, the thing that will make the biggest difference is building a relationship, the love and acceptance and welcome that children feel in this place. Ask God to build and nourish those relationships. Go through the names of the children and leaders, and ask God to be with each one, so they may experience God's love through their interactions with you, and each carry God's love home to enrich their relationship with others.

Detectives' den

Arrival activity: Code breaker

Before the session, the leaders will hide around each Detective Den five items/pictures which are clues to the story. On a sheet will be five coded words which tell the detectives what items they will be looking for. The detectives have to crack the code, write down the word, find the item in the den, and draw it on the paper. A sample code is available at urc.org.uk/holiday-club

Case file update

For activities, see urc.org.uk/holiday-club

Detective briefing

Ruth: Loving and supporting

Travelling story

Exploring a suitcase filled with clues and evidence from Ruth's story. This can be done up front with all the children, or in smaller groups. The case could be at the front when the children arrive to get them thinking and curious about its purpose and owner.



You will need a suitcase prepared in advance with the relevant 'clues' in it.

Begin by explaining that this suitcase is going to help us with our detective work today.

Who do we think it belongs to? Are there any clues? *The luggage label will have Ruth's name on, and her home address.*

Ok, so we know our person of interest today is called Ruth. Does anyone know anything about her to start us off? *(Take comments and suggestions from all groups. Perhaps capture them on your main investigation board.)*

Ruth has obviously moved around a lot – look at all these stickers. *Place stamps on the case showing the journey: Moab, Judah, Bethlehem.*

Shall we open it and see what clues we have inside? Oh it's locked, and we need a code to get in. Can anyone think of where we might find the code? *(Try all the options children might throw at you but without opening the suitcase)* Someone might suggest that if it's a Bible character, the code might be found in there. *The code will be the page number for the book of Ruth in your church Bible, eg OT307.*

Encourage children to come and lift an item out of the suitcase, and explore together what it might be telling us about Ruth's story. *Here are the items and what they might be clues to, but you could add others.*

- **Passport:** simple paper passport showing the journey Ruth went on, perhaps showing an immigrant stamp
- **Diary:** Old paper diary showing an entry for each part of the story you want to hone in on. Examples include the death of her husband, deciding to go with Naomi, the kindness of Boaz, finding a new family and faith. This could be referred back to when exploring the items

- **Drawings:** An alternative to the diary could be hand drawn pictures of key parts of Ruth's story, such as her wedding to Boaz, a picture of Ruth, Naomi and Orpah
- **Map:** showing the route from Moab to Bethlehem, showing Orpah leaving to go away
- **Two wedding rings** on a black ribbon with the names Mahlon and Boaz, to show her two husbands
- **Promise card:** with the words 'Dear Naomi, Where you go, I will go; Where you stay, I will stay; your people will be my people and your God my God. Love Ruth x
- **Wheatsheaf:** telling us about her gathering in from the edge of the field
- **Valentine's card:** to Ruth from B (helping us see that Boaz loved her)
- **Baby nappy/cloth:** Showing that she had a child
- **A family tree** – showing that Ruth is in the line of Jesus
- Once the suitcase is empty, quickly review them as an opportunity to tell the story of Ruth.

Put all the pieces back in the suitcase and close it. This can be used by any of the groups during the day. Well done detectives, on with the day.

Bible verse – John 15:12. This is my command: Love each other as I have loved you.



Video

Animation by Crossroads Kids – www.youtube.com/watch?v=irThVpdeSXk



Detectives investigate

Game: House-moving relay

Place a pile of household items for each team at one end of the room. Make sure that the items are fairly easy to carry. You may want to get one team member to stand by the pile to help the runners pick things up.

Each team forms a line. The first person runs up and collects an item and runs back to the next person in the line. They pass their item to the next team member who carries that item with them as they run to the pile to collect a second item. They run back carrying both these items and pass them both to the next person in the team who now has two items to carry as they run to get a third, and so on. If a runner drops everything, they have to put them all back on the pile and start again with one. When the time is up, the winning team is the team with most items.

Craft: Luggage label with 3D hearts

You will need:

- Red paper
- Strong card and some string
- Stapler and staples
(Optional: needle and thread)

What you do:

Cut out a label shape from strong card. Make a hole in the top and thread some string through it.



Cut out nine heart shapes that are all the same size.

Take three of the heart shapes, and place them on top of each other so that they completely line

up. Fold them in half and staple or stitch them together. Repeat this with the other hearts.

Glue the hearts onto the luggage label, and write some words which reflect the story of Ruth onto the hearts.

Then fan out the hearts to create a 3D effect.

Reflection

Ruth is a special person who loves her mother-in-law, and is prepared to give up everything, say goodbye to her friends, and travel to a strange land with different customs and traditions. For Ruth, this may even mean she would not be made welcome. This is a very brave thing to do.

- How do you choose your friends?
- How does it feel to go somewhere new?
- How might you make someone new feel welcome in your school, your church group, even in your family?

Small group prayer activity



You will need a bowl full of grain, an empty bowl, and a spoon for each child. When Ruth was working in the fields, she was a gleaner, collecting up the wheat that the farmers had left behind when they harvested their crop. Boaz took pity on her, and made sure there was plenty left for her to gather. Think about those people who do not have enough to eat, those countries where people go hungry, and people in this country who rely on food banks or other people to help them feed their families. Think, too, about refugees and migrants





in a new country. Slowly spoon the grain from the full bowl into the empty bowl until both are even. Ask God to help all to have enough to eat and for those who have plenty to be willing to share.

Recipe: Rugelach

Rugelach is a croissant-shaped filled pastry which is very popular in Israel, and among Jewish people around the world. You can buy scones or croissants or make the recipe below:

Ingredients

Puff pastry (gluten free) cut into eight equal triangles

Filling:

3/4 cup sugar
 2/3 cup dried fruit, finely chopped
 1/2 cup finely chopped walnuts, toasted (substitute with sunflower seeds or crushed pretzels)
 1/3 cup butter, melted
 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
 1 teaspoon ground allspice
 1 large egg, lightly beaten (substitute with milk)
 Additional sugar

Directions

- In a small bowl, combine the sugar, dried fruit, walnuts, melted butter, cinnamon, and allspice.
- Take one triangle of dough and sprinkle with 3 tablespoons of filling leaving 1cm round the edges.
- Roll up triangles from the wide end and place point side down on foil-lined baking sheets. Curve ends to form a crescent shape. Brush with egg or milk and sprinkle with additional sugar.
- Bake at 350°F for 18-20 minutes or until golden brown. Remove to wire racks to cool.

Detective update

Interviewing the suspect: MG interviews Ruth

MG: Oi! Hello, who are you then?

Ruth: I'm Ruth, I'm from Moab, I'm a widow. Who are you?

MG: I ask the questions round here! What's your story then? What's that bag for? Where are you going?

Ruth: Well, that is a lot of questions. My bag has all my things in. I'm on a journey. I'm going to Bethlehem, from Moab.

MG: Why are you going there?

Ruth: Well, I'm going there because that's where my mother-in-law Naomi is going.

MG: Not your idea then?

Ruth: Not really, but I said to her I will go wherever she goes, and stay wherever she stays.

MG: Haven't you got your own place to go to?

Ruth: Yes, but I love Naomi, we are both alone, and I have made her a promise. Where you go I will go, where you stay I will stay, your people will be my people, your God will be my God.



MG: What are you going to do when you get there?


Ruth: I'm not sure. I don't even know if we will have a job – I might not be welcome there.

MG: What's the point in going there, then?

Ruth: Well, sometimes you have to do what you think is right. And I think my place is to be with Naomi, to be a friend and look after her.

MG: Now I can see, I know who you are. You're one of us!

Song



Hints are everywhere we look as we investigate this book
We must search to see if we can find the truths
With a magnifying glass, and the right amount of sass
We will be a group of modern supersleuths

Where you go, that's where I'll go,
so said Ruth
And where you live, that's where I'll live,
that's the truth
I will take your God as my God, and your people as my kin
For you love me and I love you
Our adventure must begin.

Interviewing the detectives

MG asks questions of the detectives, or holds a quiz to find out what they've learned and what conclusions they've come to.

Closing prayer



This is a very old prayer, written by Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), who was a nun living in Spain. Compassion means love and concern, just as Ruth showed for Naomi.

As the leader reads the prayer, the children and adults should look at or point to each part of the body named, and think about how they can use that part of the body to do good for Christ and for others, just as Ruth did.

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.
Jesus, use our hands, our feet, our eyes,
our bodies to share your love AMEN



MARY AND MARTHA: PRAYING AND SERVING

Team time topic talk

Mary and Martha are often used as code words in the church about whether works or faith is the most important habit for Christians to cultivate. This begins in the letters of the New Testament, where we see a tension between the Letter of James, which states 'As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead' (James 2:26) and Paul's assertion in Ephesians 2:8 'You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own.'

I see Martha a little bit like Mrs Patmore, the cook in Downton Abbey – a cheerful, busy character who is good hearted, but not blessed with a great deal of insight about how she is sometimes perceived. In contrast, Mary is a more like a languid pre-Raphaelite lady (and I use the word deliberately), who sits around looking dreamy and decorative.

I don't think it's a mistake that they are always mentioned together, because they are not complete characters in themselves. We know almost nothing about them, apart from their actions. We are also not really sure if they appear elsewhere in the Bible – it could be they are the sisters of Lazarus who are mentioned in John 11, but this may be a coincidence. John may be talking about two other sisters with the same names.

It is more instructive to look where Mary and Martha fall in Luke's narrative. Their story falls between the Good Samaritan – a parable which praises good works – and Jesus teaching us about prayer. If we take these three pieces of scripture together, we see something different. Works and faith are part of the same story. We need to discern God's will, and then act on it. In this way, we are helping the Kingdom Come, just as we say

as we echo the prayer that Jesus gave us as he spoke about prayer to the disciples of his time.

- a) What are you better at: prayer, reflection or action? How can you balance this out in your own life?
- b) In our noisy, frenetic society, we do not really value making time to sit and take stock or be thoughtful in our choices about what we do. How can we cultivate and preach a more balanced life in Church, and out of it?
- c) Mary and Martha are both right, and yet both wrong at the same time. How can we communicate with others who have different priorities to us in our local churches?

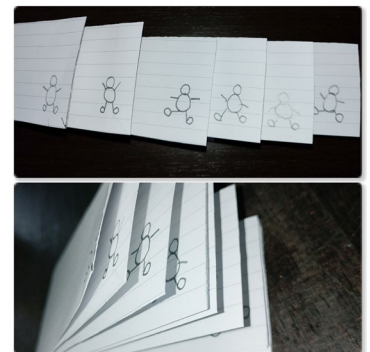
Take some time to pray together, and ask God to help you discern when to listen and be still, and when to act and to serve. In the business of running a holiday club, it can be difficult to take time to sit and listen, and yet this is often what children need. Ask God to speak to you, and give you both patience and energy for the session ahead and to speak to the children and families, too, through the activities you have planned.

Detectives' den

Arrival activity

Create a flicker book and dot-to-dot or colouring.

Cut six pieces of paper or card, and fold them into a booklet. You need to be precise when cutting the paper, as they must all be even. In the corner of each page, draw a simple image.



Every page should have the same image in a slightly different position, so that it appears to move when flicked through, like Martha running around doing lots of things to cater for Jesus.

Dot-to-dot or mindfulness colouring on the theme of praying to encourage stillness, like Mary sitting and simply being with Jesus.

Case file update

For activities, see urc.org.uk/holiday-club

Detective briefing

Mary and Martha: Praying and serving Mary and Martha Panto (Luke 10:38-42)

This skit is in pantomime style, so have fun with it, and really ham it up!

Scene: A living room and kitchen. There are pots on the stove, and dirty plates on the table. Mary is sitting on the sofa, reading. Martha comes running in through the front door.

Martha: Quick! Mary, quick! I've just met Jesus and his friends down at the square and they're coming back for dinner. (Martha stops and stares). What...what is this mess? You haven't washed the plates or pots, or dusted, or hoovered... have you just been sitting there this whole time?

Mary: (Looking guilty) Err, no, of course I haven't. I've been very busy.

Martha: Doing what? Keeping the seat warm? (Martha flounces through to the kitchen and puts on an apron)

Mary: (Sighs) No! (Looks at audience and nods and winks)

Martha: You're so lazy. (Looks at the audience) Isn't Mary lazy?

Mary: Oh no I'm not!

Audience: Oh yes you are.

Mary: Oh no I'm not!

Audience: Oh yes you are.

Mary: Oh I'm...

Martha: Enough of this malarkey (Martha passes a broom to Mary). Quick! Get the floor swept, tidy up. They'll be here soon. Oh my, there's so much to do.

(Martha starts frantically washing dishes. Mary starts to sweep the floor, but gets distracted and starts singing and dancing with the broom.)

Martha: MARY!!

(There's a knock at the door. Mary and Martha get flustered. Martha rushes into the kitchen and starts preparing drinks. Mary hides the broom behind the sofa, and answers the door.)

Mary: Hello Jesus! Hello others. Welcome. Please come in and take a seat.

[Place Jesus by the front door and disciples closer to the kitchen door].

(Jesus enters and sits down but when his friends start to enter, Mary stops them and points at the doormat.)

Mary: Wipe your feet please, I've spent ages cleaning this house.

(Everyone takes a seat, and Mary sits down on the floor next to Jesus, listening to him talking. Martha walks through with a tray of drinks and biscuits and hands it to Mary.)

Mary: Oooh lovely. I'm so thirsty and hungry after all the cleaning.

Martha: It's not for you! You're supposed to serve the drinks and biscuits to our guests.

Mary: (Through a mouthful of biscuit) I can't. My hands are full and I'm kinda busy here. Ssssh Martha, we can't hear Jesus over your huffing.



(Martha serves the drinks and biscuits, mumbling to herself about how lazy her sister is. She stomps back into the kitchen, glaring at Mary.)

Martha: Oh my, so much to do. I need to serve the cake, get more drinks, boil the potatoes, prepare the veg, roast the chicken, warm the plates, set the table, and look at her! Sat there like the Queen of Sheba. Well she can get off her lazy behind and help. She can cut and serve the cake so I can get on. But how to do it without interrupting Jesus again.

(Stage whisper)

Pssst.....psssst Mary.....PSSSSST!

(Mary glances over to Martha. Martha begins miming cutting the cake, serving it, and eating it. Mary looks confused. Martha's mime becomes more elaborate. Mary looks at the audience, makes a 'she's mad' mime to them, shrugs and goes back to Jesus.)

Martha: Aaaargh.

(Martha peeks through the door and then begins crawling around the back of the chairs towards Mary. Occasionally, Martha pops her head up, she finds the broom and with it, continues crawling to Mary. When Martha has crawled around Jesus, she pokes Mary in the side with the broom. Mary screams and accidentally throws her drink [make sure it's water] over Martha. Martha shrieks and Jesus leans over the side of the chair and peers at her.)

Jesus: Martha! Oh no, you're all wet. What were you doing down there? Are you OK?

Martha: No, I'm not! I really wanted to see you today and speak with you, but I'm so busy in the kitchen getting everything prepared while lazybones here (prods Mary) just sits here and does nothing to help me. Tell her Jesus! Tell her to stop being so lazy and to help me!

Mary: I'M NOT LAZY!

Martha and audience: Oh yes you are!
(Do this a few times in panto fashion).

Jesus: Ladies! Come now, enough of this. Martha come and sit down. (Martha begins protesting as Jesus leads her to a chair). Martha, hush. Sometimes, we have to work out what's really important, and make sure that we do the really important thing. Mary knows that it is very important to listen to me, to hear about God and all the wonders in this world.

Martha: But Jesus, the food! It's important too. It won't cook itself, and we're supposed to have dinner together. I can't just sit around; nothing will get done.

Jesus: My dearest Martha. It's so lovely that you're worried about feeding me, about making sure that I get a fantastic dinner, but what would you rather do? What do you think is more important? Cooking the food or coming and talking with me?

Martha: Well, obviously, I'd rather be with you. I invited you here, and I want to spend time with you. But....

Jesus: No buts, Martha. For today, follow Mary's example. It's more important for you and me to spend time together, so do that. Don't worry about the food. Peter has the local takeaway on speed dial, so we'll all still eat. Do what is important, sit, relax and let's enjoy each other's company. (While Jesus is talking, Mary can be getting Martha a drink, the disciples can be putting a stool under her feet. Everyone sits down.)

Bible verse: James 4:8 'Come near to God, and God will come near to you.'



Video

Animation by Crossroads Kids www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQGKLA4AfXs



Detectives investigate

Games: Mary and Martha, Jesus is coming

A group leader shouts out the commands.

All the players line up single file. Introduce the various commands and actions to be used in the game: run in; run out; run here; run there; pray (fall to your knees like you are praying); clean the windows; listen to Jesus; cook the dinner; sweep the floor; be still like a statue; do the ironing; sit down; Mary (everyone sits down); Martha (everyone runs around).

When you are ready for play to commence, the players do the action associated with the command.

Play continues with the leader calling and the players responding. The faster the actions are called and performed, the trickier (and funnier) the game becomes.

Craft: Egg timer

You will need:

- Two small clean and dry plastic bottles with flat-top lids
- Glue
- Strong tape
- Fine sand or salt



What you do:

Make a hole in the lid of one of the bottles using a sharp point (an adult will need to help with this).

Remove the lid of the other bottle, and join the two lids together with glue and tape, then make the hole go through both lids, and make it bigger using a screwdriver or big nail. The hole needs to be big enough to get a good flow of sand through it. You may need to experiment with it.

Fill one bottle half-way with play sand or salt, screw the lids onto this bottle, and then screw the other bottle in place. Secure the bottles together using strong tape.

Watch the sand flow through and be like Mary sitting still, while the sand is like Martha rushing through the timer.

Reflection

We may do things differently and think about things in different ways, but we can all work better for Jesus if we combine our thinking and doing together to make our families happy and safe places to be.

- Who likes to do?
- Who likes to think?

Small group prayer activity

Make a glitter jar. Fill a screw-top jam jar or bottle a third full of clear glue or glitter glue. Add a small amount of blue food colouring. Add a tablespoon of glitter or table confetti, and fill the jar with warm water to help it mix with the glue. Put the top on the jar and screw the lid tightly, then shake well to mix all the ingredients. Your glitter jar is now ready to use. Find a space to sit comfortably and place your jar where you can see it. Shake the jar and sit and watch as the glitter falls. Sometimes we are busy, busy, busy doing things to serve God in our world, but sometimes it is good just to sit and listen to God.



Recipe: Double decker sandwiches

Ingredients

- Bread (gluten free)
- Butter/margarine
- Fillings including (but not limited to!)
 - Peanut butter
 - Jam
 - Cheese
 - Sliced ham
 - Tomato
 - Egg
 - Fairtrade chocolate spread
 - Honey

Directions

Give the children three slices of bread each. Get them to make one sandwich, selecting one of the fillings which they think could represent Martha or being busy/doing things. Once this is completed, get them to add another layer of filling to the top of the sandwich, this time thinking of something that could represent Mary or being still. Cover it with the third slice of bread.

Detective update

Interviewing the suspect:

MG interviews Mary and Martha

MG: Oi! Hello, who are you two then?

M and M: I'm Mary, and I'm Martha. We are sisters. Who are you?

MG: I ask the questions round here! You looked like you were bickering, what's your story then?

Martha: I was telling her that she needs to help more around the house.

Mary: And I was telling her that she needs to learn how to stop once in a while and be there for people.

MG: Which one of you is right then?

Martha: Well, I think I am. If someone comes to your house, you should look after



them, clean the house, make the food, give them a drink... so much to do.

Mary: And I was saying you need to spend time with them, talk, catch up, and listen to them.

MG: So which one is right, then?

Martha: I am

Mary: No, I am!

MG: Who is coming to visit you?

Martha: Oh, it's very special. It's Jesus. He's a very important person.

Mary: And a very good friend.

MG: Why is he coming to your house?

Martha: He often comes to visit. He knows we will look after him.

Mary: He knows he is welcome in our house; it gives him a chance to get away from the crowds, a safe place, with friends.

MG: Now I can see, I know who you are. You're one of us!



Song



Hints are everywhere we look as we investigate this book
We must search to see if we can find the truths
With a magnifying glass, and the right amount of sass
We will be a group of modern supersleuths

There was Mary, there was Martha in their home
One was working, one was praying all alone
Both things needed to be done, but it doesn't sound much fun
But they knew that very soon they would be welcoming God's son

Interviewing the detectives

MG asks questions of the detectives or holds a quiz to find out what they've learned and what conclusions they've come to.

Closing prayer



Children stand a little apart from each other. At AMEN, children wave their hands; dance, make noise or move however they like (Frenzy). When they hear the word Jesus, they stop and listen. At the final Amen, the children cheer.

Martha liked to do things and Mary liked to think. Thank you, God, for all those people we know who are like Mary and Martha AMEN. **Frenzy**

Jesus, we thank you for all the people who do good in the world. We now think of someone we know who helps make other people happy. **Silence**

Thank you for those special people AMEN. **Frenzy**

Jesus, we thank you for all the people who are brainy and think of ways that make other people's lives easier. We think of someone we know who helps other people. **Silence**

Thank you for those special people AMEN. **Frenzy**

Jesus, we thank you for all the people who have worked so hard to keep us safe over the past year. We think of someone we know who is a doctor, nurse, works in a shop or has looked after someone. **Silence**

Thank you for those special people AMEN. **Frenzy**

Jesus, we thank you for all the people who are helping us learn and grow, our teachers and schools, our families, our church, the groups we belong to. We think of someone we know who has taught us something important. **Silence**

Thank you for those special people AMEN. **Frenzy**

Jesus, we ask you to help us be a little bit like both Mary and Martha. Help us to do our best to show people your love in all we think and do. **Amen (cheer)**



TIMOTHY: COMPANIONSHIP AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Team time topic talk

There are two things that stand out about Timothy. First, he has a dual heritage, with a Jewish mother and a Greek father. Second, he is incredibly young to be Paul's companion on his travels and sharing his first imprisonment in Rome. Paul shows his deep regard and love for Timothy as a current and future leader of the church as he writes two letters to him in prison, encouraging him in his ministry and calling him 'my beloved son'.

Paul's support does not mean that it was all easy for Timothy in his ministry. To make Timothy more acceptable to Jewish Christians, Paul had him circumcised as a young man – a painful and dangerous operation. By doing this, he hoped that Timothy would be more acceptable as a leader in the burgeoning Jesus movement for those who were uncomfortable with Gentile Christians.

We also learn that Paul sent him to Ephesus to lead the church, and to deal with some of the elders who were teaching things Paul did not approve of. Paul's letter to him acknowledges Timothy's struggles to get others to respect his leadership because of his age – even when he has Paul's explicit backing.

It seems the more things change, the more they stay the same. In our churches, we often try to downplay difference so that others who are disturbed by it are placated. We often talk about our young folk being the future of the church, ignoring they are already our present and must be treated as such. Those of us in authority in the Church would do well to ponder how we often unwittingly downplay rather than celebrate diversity, and how we often try to entertain our young people rather than taking them seriously. How often do we downplay difference rather than celebrate diversity in our churches?

- a) How seriously do we take young people in our local church? Is our aim to entertain them, or to take them seriously as people with needs, aspirations and opinions of their own?
- b) What are our own struggles with accepting difference? How can we overcome our own fears about accepting others as an equal co-heir of grace?
- c) What do we say to other people who are uncomfortable with difference? It can be hard to adjust our thinking and realise we haven't always been fair to others. How could you help someone to change their thinking and attitudes so they are fairer to others?

Take some time to pray together, for God to help you listen to and learn from the children in your holiday club session today, to help you to enable them to hear God's word and share it through your conversations together. Ask God to help you to avoid being a stumbling block that hinders children coming to God, but rather to be an enabler, an advocate, an encourager. Confess any difficulties that you have with accepting difference, and be renewed by God's forgiveness.



Detectives' den

Arrival activity

Make a cheerleader's pom-pom by sticking strips of scrap paper around one end of a cardboard tube.

Wave it in the air and cheer as each new person arrives. You could even make up a group cheer.

Case file update

For activities, see urc.org.uk/holiday-club



Detective Briefing

Timothy: Companionship and encouragement

Sketch – Timothy speaking to the children

Characters – Timothy, Eunice and Lois

You will need to make the badges that he shows.

As Eunice and Lois give Timothy badges, they can make a fuss over him, and get the children involved in giving him the badges and cheering each time.

Timothy can be very proud but lose his confidence – the children can encourage him to keep going.

Timothy: Hello. My name's Timothy, which means Precious to God. (He is wearing a badge – Precious)

I live here with my grandmother Lois and my mum Eunice. (They enter with a basket of badges for him)

I'm a Christian. My mum and nana have taught me about Jesus and how to live the way he wants me to. Even though I'm still very young, I'm going to teach others about God too.

Lois: Timothy, I'm so proud of you, you are so kind and helpful. (Badge – Kind and helpful)

Eunice: I love you, Timothy; you love God and others can see it. (Badge – Love God)

Lois: Everyone looks up to you, you are such a good example. (Badge – Good example)

Eunice: You are a natural leader too – you are going to do great things. (Badge – Leader)

Lois: I know you are such a good friend to people; Paul is very impressed with you and wants you to help the new Christians. (Badge – Helper)

Eunice: Paul has some big jobs for you to do. You will go to faraway places, and teach others about God. (Badge – Missionary)

Timothy looks at all his badges

Timothy: Wow, thank you so much everybody, look at all these amazing badges. I feel ready for anything now. Right, here I go... I'm going to go out and teach people about God. I'm going to love them and help them and be a good leader, even though I'm only young. Wish me luck everybody!

Timothy leaves the room, and quickly returns, looking stressed and unhappy.

Eunice and Lois ask him what happened

Eunice and Lois: Timothy, what's wrong, what has happened?

As Timothy speaks, he removes the badges and throws them in the bin.

Timothy: It was really hard. When I spoke, the people didn't listen to me. They said, 'Why should we listen to you? You are just a kid.' I forgot my words when I was speaking, and I got angry and upset, and sometimes I shouted. I don't know why I even tried. I should have known better. I'm just a child. God can't use me. I can't be a leader or a good example. I'm not doing it. I give up.

Eunice and Lois get the children involved in giving Timothy encouragement and reasons to not give up...

Eunice: Timothy, yes, you are young, but you mustn't let that stop you. Do you remember what Paul wrote to you? Do not let people look down on you because you are young, but show them how strong you are in how you live your life. Be an example. Come on children, let's give Timothy some encouragement.

As the children encourage Timothy, he can be given his badges to put back on

Timothy: Thank you everybody, you are right. I'm not going to give up. I'm going to keep going and if I can do it, so can you. Let's all go out and be the best we can be. Loving God and loving others. CHEER



Bible Verse: 1 Thessalonians 5:11 'So comfort each other and give each other strength.'



Video

Timothy's story by Crossroads Kids www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4GSFluzBSA

Detectives investigate

Games: Mini challenges

Have a basket of mini challenges. Each person in turn chooses one and does it, as everyone else cheers them on. The challenges could be things like do ten push ups; juggle; do 50 keepy-uppies; limbo under a pole; move the Maltesers from one plate to another using a straw; sit still for a minute.

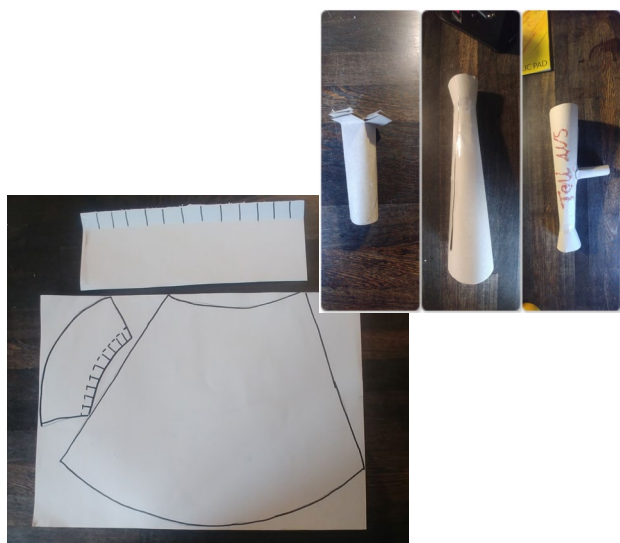
Craft: Loud Hailer

You will need:

- A large square piece of card or stiff paper (the inside of a wrapping paper roll is ideal)
- Kitchen roll inner or tube of cardboard

What you do:

Mark out a cone shape for the main body of the loud hailer, and a much smaller one for the mouthpiece. Cut out the large cone shape and tape together.



To make the mouthpiece, cut out the small cone shape and fold the inner edge, snipping around the edge to create tags to secure the mouthpiece to the body. Roll it into a cone, and measure it in the

body before taping together. Once it is the correct size, place tape to the tags and secure in place; tape it to the main body inside and out for security.

Use a kitchen roll inner or cut out a rectangle of card and roll it up to create a handle. Snip down about 1cm to create tags, and secure to the main body with tape by flattening the tags against the body and taping it in place.

Decorate it.

Reflection

Timothy is a young person called by God to lead a church, even when older people grumbled about it. God blessed Timothy with the skills he needed to do God's work, encouraged by his older friend Paul.

- Like Timothy, how important do you feel to your church?
- Who encourages you?

Small group prayer activity

In our investigations, we haven't taken any fingerprints yet. Our fingerprints are unique to each of us. Each one of us is made as an individual – there is nobody in the world like us – and we all have our part to play in God's plan. We should be encouraged by this. Use your fingerprint to make pictures of the people you want to encourage, and ask God to use your unique skills to help them.

Recipe: Friendship biscuits

You can buy digestive biscuits, prepared icing, and decorations. Get the children to put two different toppings on to signify a friend they have. Otherwise, you can make the biscuits and the icing. This recipe should make 16 biscuits.

Ingredients

- 110g (4 oz) butter
- 55g (2 oz) Fairtrade sugar
- Few drops vanilla extract
- 2 1/2 tablespoons water
- 175g (6 oz) plain flour (gluten free, if needed)
- Chocolate chips
- Fairtrade sultanas



Directions

- Preheat the oven to 150°C / Gas mark 2.
- Add butter and sugar to a bowl, and beat well until light and fluffy.
- Add the vanilla and the water, and mix.
- Add the chocolate and the raisins, and then add the flour and mix well.
- Roll out to about 5mm on a floured work surface. Cut into shapes and place on a greased baking tray.
- Bake for 25 minutes, or until golden brown. If they are mini biscuits, about 15 minutes or less.

Detective update

Interviewing the suspect: MG interviews Timothy

MG: Oi! Hello, who are you then?

Timothy: I'm Timothy, 19 years old and I live with my mum and my nana. Who are you?

MG: I ask the questions round here! What's your story then? What do you do?

Timothy: I'm a leader. I run a small church. Have you heard about Jesus? Are you a believer?

MG: I ask the questions. Aren't you too young to be a leader?

Timothy: Well, that's what some people say, but I do my best.

MG: Do you like being a leader, then?

Timothy: Yes, but not all the time. Sometimes I feel I'm not good enough.

MG: Perhaps you are not good enough; aren't you scared of what people might say?

Timothy: I try to be brave. God gave me this job to do.

MG: What are you going to do then?


Timothy: Well, I guess I need to be the best I can be, and remember all the advice and kind things people have said to me over the years.

MG: Are you ready to be a leader?

Timothy: Yes, no, oh I'm not sure, but I know it's what I'm supposed to be doing. So I'm going to try my best, remembering that God is with me.

MG: Now I can see, I know who you are. You're one of us!

Song




Hints are everywhere we look as we investigate this book
We must search to see if we can find the truths
With a magnifying glass, and the right amount of sass
We will be a group of modern supersleuths
At the time when his adventure just begun
And when he answered God's call, it was helping his friend Paul
He showed courage and encouraged him
To share God's love with all

Interviewing the detectives

MG asks questions of the detectives or holds a quiz to find out what they've learned and what conclusions they've come to.

Closing prayer



Every child is given a paper strip on which is written the name of another child within the holiday club. They are asked to write or draw something nice/encouraging about that person. The strips of paper are formed into a paper chain and placed in a circle in the middle, the last strip of paper forming a loop which joins both ends together.

God, help us to support each other and build each other up so that together we can all be encouraged. Amen



ESTHER: STANDING UP FOR THE OPPRESSED

Team time topic talk

The Book of Esther is like a pantomime with evil villains, pantomime dames and a beautiful heroine. It is a strange book to have in the Bible, because God is not mentioned once. Instead, we have to look much harder to see God's purpose unfolding through coincidence and lucky chances.

The story starts with the drunken Persian king divorcing his first wife because she would not obey him. He holds a beauty pageant to find a new wife. He selects Esther, but he is not aware she is Jewish. Then the coincidence occurs, which the whole story hinges upon. Esther's guardian, Mordecai, overhears an assassination plot. He tells Esther, who 'just happens' now to have the king's ear as his new wife.

The evil villain, Haman, plots to destroy all Jews in the kingdom. He gets the king, mindlessly, to sign the decree. Esther and Mordecai devise a strategy to save their people – to tell the king she is Jewish, and unmask Haman for the villain he is. Their plot works, and Esther and Mordecai triumph over Haman and all their enemies. The people of Israel are saved.

The story invites us to consider how oppression and prejudice kills and maims both body and spirit. Esther, the plucky heroine, risks her own life to save people from discrimination and death. We know that in our own time, and in our own society, things are not fair for everyone. This story shows that God sides with the oppressed and vulnerable – a lesson we would all do well to heed.

a) How, in your own life, do you work actively for those who suffer discrimination and disadvantage? If you cannot think of something, how could you start?

b) In this story, God works through others to achieve justice. Who do you consider are people like Esther and Mordecai in our own time?

c) How are you called personally to help bring about God's plans for fairness and justice? How as a church could we do more?

Take time to pray together for peace, justice and fairness in God's world, and for you to treat the children and families in your holiday club fairly in today's sessions. Ask God to make you aware of anyone who is feeling left out or different or uncomfortable in any way, whether among the children or the adults.

Detectives' den

Arrival activity: Secret messages – God is in the story, but not visible.

You will need paper and pencil, OR paper, lemon juice, a paintbrush and a torch or LED candle.

Place one piece of paper on top of another. Write on the upper piece of paper with a pen or pencil, pressing firmly. Write a message like 'God is here, God is with us, God is in the story'. Then remove the top paper and lightly shade the bottom paper with a pencil. And so the message is revealed.

Alternatively, you could use a fine paint brush to write the message in lemon juice. Hold the paper up against a light or by an LED candle to reveal your invisible message.

Case file update

For activities, see urc.org.uk/holiday-club



Detective briefing

Standing up for the oppressed: Esther Monologue drama: Something not quite right

As you read this, you will find that the children and adults start to join in with the 'not quite right' – you can encourage this by just slightly pausing before you say it.

The town was very different that day.
The sun shone bright, with all its might,
but something in the town was not quite right.

Where were the merchants selling their wares?
Where were the children with their teddy bears?
The sun shone bright, with all its might,
But something in the town was not quite right.

The people sighed, the people cried,
Their sorrow was felt far and wide.
Still the sun shone bright, with all its might,
But something in the town was not quite right.

Up in the palace, high on the hill,
Queen Esther stood shivering, like she had a chill.
She trembled with fear, she trembled with fright,
Would the King help her with her plight?

The people sighed, the people cried,
Their sorrow was felt far and wide.
The sun shone bright, with all its might,
But something in the town was not quite right.

Queen Esther stood straight,
Queen Esther was brave,
Even though her situation was grave.
The sun shone bright, with all its might,
But something in the town was not quite right.

The queen heard their cries
And the queen felt the call,
The tug in her heart
To stand up for them all.

The queen knew she must go to the king
But this was a very dangerous thing.

Queen Esther knew she had to try

Even if it meant that she might die.

The people sighed, the people cried,
Their sorrow was felt far and wide.
The sun shone bright, with all its might,
But something in the town was not quite right.

Queen Esther went to the King uninvited,
But when he saw her, he was delighted.
He called her close, then saw her tears,
He asked her what it is she fears.
The sun shone bright, with all its might,
But something in the town was not quite right.

Queen Esther stood straight,
Queen Esther was brave,
“My people will soon all be in graves”.

‘What do you mean?’ the King said with a cry,
‘A law has been passed that my people must die.’
The King was aghast, he had to act fast!
To save all the people, a new law must be passed.

The King made a decree, spread far and wide,
Queen Esther’s people were no longer to hide,
No longer were their lives in danger,
This new law was a real game-changer.

The people sang, the people laughed,
Their joy was felt far and wide.
The sun shone bright, with all its might,
And everything in the town was just right.

Esther was praised and bathed in the glory
But where do we find God in this story?
Who were the villains and who gets a cheer?
What can it teach us about bravery and fear?

Bible verse: Proverbs 31:8 ‘Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Defend the rights of all those who have nothing.’



Video

Animation by Kids on the move

www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaS_ePAjCvk



Detectives Investigate

Games: Fair/unfair

Mark a line on the floor or stretch a skipping rope down the middle of the hall. All players line up on one side of the line. Tell them that they are standing on the 'fair' side of the line, and the other side is 'unfair'. The leader will call out either the word 'fair' or the word 'unfair', and they are to listen and jump quickly to the correct side of the line. The leader calls out a mixture of the words, trying to trick the players by saying the same word several times in a row or speeding up and slowing down.

Older children could have more space between lines, forcing them to exert more energy in a shorter amount of time, or you could occasionally throw in the word 'unsure' with the instruction to jump so that one foot is each side of the line.

Craft: Queen Esther's nature crown

You will need:

- An old cardboard pizza base or large circle of card
- Double-sided sticky tape
- Leaves, grasses and flowers found on a walk (These were all blown off in the wind – be careful not to pick wildflowers or to spoil your neighbour's plants!)
- Alternatively, use paper flowers to decorate the crown.



What you do:

Cut a star shape in the middle of the circle of card.

Place the double-sided tape on the card where you want the flowers and leaves to stick.

Take the backing off, and stick your leaves and flowers down.

Reflection

As a young child, Jesus would have known this story, and understood that bullying was wrong. As Jesus grew up, he stood up for those who were treated unfairly, just like Esther did.

- Have you ever been bullied, or have you ever treated someone else unfairly?
- How can you help someone who has been bullied?
- If you were bullied, what would you do?

Small group prayer activity

Use paper/card people cut outs (these can be obtained from a pound shop or Wilkos), cut out from recycled card/paper, or even drawn in chalk outside on a church flagged area or garden patio. Alternatively, you could use a paper plate for each child, and have them draw their face on it.

Over the figure or round the edge of the plate, write words that describe who you are – about your appearance, your age, your hobbies, your likes and dislikes etc. Place all the pictures together. Ask God to help you not to treat anyone who is different unfairly, and to make you brave like Esther in standing up for others when people treat them unfairly.

Recipe: Fairtrade Honey mug cakes

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp melted butter (oil)
- 2 tbsp Fairtrade honey (agave nectar)
- 1 medium egg (egg replacer)
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- 3 tbsp Fairtrade sugar
- 4 tbsp self-raising flour (gluten free)
- Pinch of salt

Directions

- Add the butter, honey, egg and vanilla, and beat with a fork until combined in a mug.
- Add the sugar, flour and salt and beat again until fully combined and smooth.
- Cook in the microwave for around 1 minute 15 seconds to 1 minute 30 seconds.
- Let it cool a bit first before eating!



Detective update

Interviewing the suspect: MG interviews Esther

MG: Oi! Hello, who are you then?

Esther: I'm Esther, Queen of Persia, and the most beautiful girl in the land. Who are you?

MG: I ask the questions round here! What's your story then? You look sad -- what's wrong with you?

Esther: I am sad, someone is planning to hurt my people.

MG: What are you going to do about it, then?

Esther: Well, that's the problem. I know I can go and tell the king and I think he will help me, but...

MG: Why don't you do it, then?

Esther: Well, because I'm scared. You can't just walk into the king's room and speak to him. You have to wait to be called for. You can get into some serious trouble, you know.

MG: What are you going to do then?

Esther: I don't know, I might go and speak to my uncle Mordecai, and see what he thinks I should do.

MG: What if you fail?

Esther: I hadn't thought of that. No, it's not an option. Someone has to do something, and I'm the only one. I believe I became Queen of Persia for a day like today. I believe I have to make a difference before it's too late.

MG: Now I can see, I know who you are. You're one of us!

Interviewing the detectives

MG asks questions of the detectives, or holds a quiz to find out what they've learned and what conclusions they've come to.

Song



Hints are everywhere we look as we investigate this book
We must search to see if we can find the truths
With a magnifying glass, and the right amount of sass
We will be a group of modern supersleuths

Esther lives in Persia, she's a Jew
And though scared,
she knew just what she had to do
She gave Xerxes a request: please don't keep my kin oppressed
Is she a hero or a villain?
What d'you think, what's your guess?

Closing prayer



At the end of each line, to the words 'Even though we feel small...' the response is 'help us to stand up and speak out'. Children and leaders crouch down small (or sit down if less mobile), and when they hear the cue words, jump up and shout out the response.

Sometimes people are picked on or bullied.
Even though we feel small.... Help us to stand up and speak out.

Sometimes people are left out or feel unwanted.
Even though we feel small.... Help us to stand up and speak out.

Sometimes people are treated unfairly.
Even though we feel small.... Help us to stand up and speak out.

Sometimes people are going through tough times.
Even though we feel small.... Help us to stand up and speak out.

Sometimes people don't take care of each other and your world.

Even though we feel small.... Help us to stand up and speak out.

Amen



ABRAM AND SARAI: FAITH AND BELIEVING

Team time topic talk

Like Ruth, Abram and Sarai are immigrants who leave their land in the Euphrates, and travel at God's invitation into a new land where they have many adventures. Abram and Sarai covenant with God and, as part of this agreement, are renamed Abraham and Sarah. They become the founders of a special family who bring God's salvation into the world.

Abraham and Sarah are not perfect people. Sarah has a mean and jealous streak, and is incredibly cruel to Hagar, their servant and surrogate mother to Abraham's first son, Ishmael. Abraham is shown to be somewhat devious, several times passing off his wife as his sister for the sake of expediency. He also fails to live up to his responsibilities to his first son, Ishmael, and his mother, allowing them to be driven into the desert and their probable deaths.

But even with their flaws, they believe in God's promises. They are faithful to God, to the point of being willing to sacrifice the most precious thing they have, their son Isaac, in obedience to God's command.

Like many faithful characters in the Bible, they are rewarded for their faith and hope. God poetically promised them descendants as numerous as stars in the sky. This promise has been made a reality, because they have a special place in Judaism as the Mother and Father of the people of Israel. And, as Christians, we are also part of God's promise because we claim them as our own spiritual ancestors. This makes God's promise far greater than they ever could have imagined in their faith and hope.

a) How much do your faith and beliefs inform how you live? How different are your life choices because you are a Christian?

b) Abram and Sarai's faithfulness to God's call and their beliefs led them to places they never expected to go. Think of a time when God has called you into new experiences, and reflect how this brought blessings into your own life.

c) Time and time again in the Bible, God calls us back to the values and beliefs that we commit to, but do not always live out. How can we be more faithful in our private lives and in the life of our churches to our professed beliefs?

Take some time to pray together for God to give us confidence in sharing our faith and our beliefs with the children and families gathered at the holiday club today. Pray that the children will have the confidence to share what they have learned this week with the people they meet and to trust God's promises in every aspect of their daily lives, no matter where God may lead them.

Detectives' den

Arrival activity

Guess how many stars in a jar. Have a jar with lots of star shapes in it, and the team has to guess how many there are. An additional challenge might be to find the passage in the Bible it relates to.

Case file update

For activities, see urc.org.uk/holiday-club

Detective briefing

Faith and believing: Abraham and Sarah An interactive story, telling of the father and mother of Israel

I'm going to tell you a story, but I need your help.

In this story, there is a lot of laughter.
That's where you come in.





When I say the word laugh or laughter, I need you to laugh your biggest belly laugh.

Let's have a practice.

(Be aware that, similar to Laughter Yoga, the more you pretend to laugh, the more likely it is that real laughter will kick in. This is good, so go with it)

Has anyone ever been to the beach? Show of hands?

How many grains of sand were there on the beach? Didn't you count them?

What a silly idea, trying to count the grains of sand on the beach! Don't make me laugh! **LAUGHTER**

What about the stars in the sky? Has anyone every counted them?

How many do you think there are?

Counting the stars in the sky, what a silly

idea! Don't make me laugh! **LAUGHTER**

Well, this story talks about both those things.

It's about a man called Abram and his wife, who was called Sarai.

They lived long, long ago in the land of Canaan.

Abram was very old. He was even older than (say someone's name in the room, probably the oldest leader) Older than that? Don't make me laugh! **LAUGHTER**

Abram was 99 years old; Sarai was very old too. And they didn't have any children. Well, not yet, anyway.

Not yet? They can't have children at 99 years old! Don't make me laugh! **LAUGHTER**

God had a plan for them both.

One day, God said to Abram, 'I am going to make



you the father of a whole nation. Look at the stars in the sky, count them. This will be the number of your children. This will be my promise to you.'

Abram fell down on his face.

God said, I will also change your name; from this day on you will be called Abraham and your wife will be called Sarah.

Abraham had faith and believed what God said, but how would he have children?

God said to him, your wife Sarah will have a son. My promise is to you and to your son.

Abraham thought, how can I have a baby with Sarah? I am nearly 100 and she isn't much younger herself. It's not possible. Don't make me laugh! **LAUGHTER**

Sarah was listening a little further away, and when she heard God say that she would have a baby she also thought, ME? A BABY! I'm 90. Don't make me laugh! **LAUGHTER**

Why did they laugh? **LAUGHTER** Surely they knew that nothing is impossible with God, and God always keeps a promise.

The next year, God's promise came true. Sarah was pregnant at 90 years of age, and she had a baby boy. She called him Isaac.

You know what the name Isaac means? It means 'he will laugh'. **LAUGHTER**

Abraham's family continued to grow, and his descendants were as many as the grains of sand on the beach and the stars in the sky.

God always keeps a promise, and there are promises for you, too.

It's the truth, no joke, but it's always good to laugh. **LAUGHTER**

Bible verse: Jeremiah 29:11 'I know what I have planned for you,' says the Lord. 'I have good plans for you. I don't plan to hurt you. I plan to give you hope and a good future.'



Video

Animation by Bible Stories for Kids www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjXpgYq_NiQ

Detectives investigate

Games: Sorting stars

Stars of different colours are stuck onto plastic balls and placed in a paddling pool. Each team is given a colour to collect, and they must gather as many stars of the correct colour as possible in the time limit.

Craft: Snake bubbles

You will need:

- A plastic bottle
- An old sock
- Washing up liquid
- Bowl
- (Optional: Food colouring)



What you do:

Cut the bottom off a small plastic bottle.

Place an old sock over the open end of the bottle, pulling it right down until there is a flat bit of sock covering the end of the bottle, then turn down the top of the sock to make it secure. If the sock slips, use an elastic band to keep it in place.

To make a rainbow effect, put a few drops of food colouring around the flat end of the sock.

In a small bowl, mix a good squeeze of washing up liquid with half a cup of water.

Dip the sock into the liquid, and then blow through the top of the bottle and watch the bubbles grow through the sock. Think about how the family of Abraham and Sarah spread out from a small beginning, just as God had promised.

Reflection

Even though Abraham and Sarah were quite old, God gave them a very special job to do for him. Sometimes we do the right things, and sometimes we get things very wrong, just like Abraham and Sarah. The good news is that God loves us even when we are not doing our very best; God understands, and that is why all sorts of people can play their part in the mission of God.

- How do you think God is using you?
- Can you think of someone much older than you who has helped you know God and Jesus better?

I wonder if they know what an amazing gift they have given you?

Small group prayer activity

Use a six-pointed star template. Draw a line around the base of the points to make a hexagon. Colour the points with bright colours – you may want to use silver/gold felt pens – while you think about what it means to trust God. Write a prayer in the centre of the



hexagon, then fold the points in to cover it. Place your hexagon into a bowl of water, maybe using some dark blue food colouring in the water to make it look like the night sky. Your stars will open up, releasing your prayer to God.

Recipe: Stuffed dates

Ingredients

Medjool dates
Cream cheese
Chocolate chips
Peanut butter (chocolate spread)
Silver balls or star shaped cake decorations

Directions

- Prior to the session, take out the stones from the dates by making an incision down the middle and removing the stone.
- Each person needs four dates.
- Fill two dates with cream cheese, and sprinkle with chocolate chips to represent the desert stones.
- Fill the other two with peanut butter, and sprinkle with silver balls or star shaped cake decorations to represent the stars.

Detective update

Interviewing the suspect:

MG interviews Abraham and Sarah

MG: Oi! Hello, who are you then?

A and S: I'm Abraham, I'm 99 years old, and I'm his wife Sarah, I'm very old too. Who are you?

MG: I ask the questions round here! What's your story then? Why are you laughing?

Abraham: Because we just found out that we are going to have a baby.

MG: What's so funny about that?

Abraham: We are too old to have a baby.

Sarah: And not just one, we have been told that our family will be as big as



the number of stars in the sky.

MG: Have you counted them?

Abraham: No, there's too many.

Sarah: We can't believe it ourselves.
Having a baby at our age?

MG: Who told you you were going to
have a baby? Was it a doctor?

Abraham: Not quite, it was actually God.

Sarah: And we are going to call the baby Isaac.

MG: How do you know it's actually
going to happen, then?

Abraham: I guess we just have to believe.

Sarah: And have faith. If this is God's
plan, then God will help us through it.

Song

Hints are everywhere we look as we investigate this book
We must search to see if we can find the truths
With a magnifying glass, and the right amount of sass
We will be a group of modern supersleuths

Abraham and Sarah were quite old
They could not have any children, they'd been told
Ishmael did no wrong but then Isaac came along
Who's the hero, who's the villain in this song?



Interviewing the detectives

MG asks questions
of the detectives, or
holds a quiz to find out
what they've learned
and what conclusions
they've come to.

Closing prayer



God called Abram and Sarai (come here gesture).
They listened (hand cupped by ear)
And they wandered far (march movement):
Up mountains (hands steepled),
Down valleys (invert steeple),
Over rivers (arms undulate in river motion),
To follow God (point upwards).
They met kings (put hand above head with fingertips down like a crown)
And pharaohs (hand pointing out with back of hand on forehead like a snake)
But it was God (point upwards)
That they trusted (hands crossed on chest).
And God (point upwards) gave them new names:
Abraham (Make the sign for 'dad' by using the index and middle fingers of one hand to tap twice
across the index and middle fingers of the other hand)
and Sarah (To make the sign for mum, use three fingers of one hand to tap twice across the palm of
the other hand).
God (point up) promised them that their children and their children and their children's children
(make cradle with arms and rock)
would be as many as the stars (hands raised with fingers wriggling).
Thank you (Sign 'thank you' by straightening your hand, bringing your fingers to your chin, and
then pulling them away) for Abraham (dad sign) and Sarah (mum sign).
Amen.

