



Jubilee

50th

Faith – Hope – Love
Since 1972

The
United
Reformed
Church **Youth**

2022 Children's and
Youth Work Theme

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

Welcome to the United Reformed Church (URC) Children's and Youth Work (CYW) resources

Welcome to the United Reformed Church children's and youth work resources for our year of jubilee to mark the URC's fiftieth anniversary.

The United Reformed Church began on 5 October 1972 when two denominations (Congregationalists and English Presbyterians) joined together. It further developed when Churches of Christ joined in 1981, followed by the Congregational Union of Scotland in 2000. So the URC is 50 in 2022.

This resource unpacks the biblical theme of jubilee, and explores ways to commemorate the past, celebrate the present and create the future together. Here is a wide variety of ways to involve everyone, whatever their age or stage, across the year.

Gathered in this resource pack you will discover a wealth of material to enjoy with children, young people, young adults and in intergenerational contexts. The headings for sections are only guides – please don't limit yourself to those that most obviously fit your context as you will find great ideas you can adapt in other places.

Later in the year, a free downloadable Holiday Club resource will be available to complement this booklet. See www.urc.org.uk/who-we-are/what-we-do/children-youth/ for details and a range of other resources. You will also find a downloadable version of this booklet there.

If you don't have any children or young people connected with your church, please:

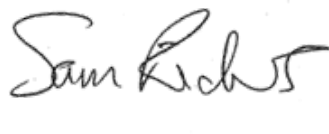
- Enjoy the colouring pages and use some of the prayers, Bible studies and other materials with your adult groups
- Pray for those churches nearest to you which do, and the children and young people in your local community
- Offer these resources to your nearest uniformed group or school.

There is a pull-out poster in the centre – this is taken from the intergenerational picture book *Celebrate Together*, specially written for the URC's 50th anniversary. Free copies of this lovely lift-the-flap book are available to order from the URC bookshop for you to give away throughout the jubilee year (www.urcshop.co.uk).

Blow the trumpet and let the party begin!



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Special thanks to:

CYDO+ team, especially Lorraine Downer, Nicola Grieves, Judy Harris, Steven Mitchell, Jess Poole, Leo Roberts, Jon Steel and Ruth White.

Church House Children's and Youth Work team: Triin Kubar, Sam Richards, Lorraine Webb and Heather Wilkinson.

Friends and colleagues at Church House and elsewhere: Matt Barkley, Bethany Davies, the Revd Roger Jones, the Revd Kevin Snyman, Justin Thacker, Roo Stewart of the Joint Public Issues Team, Holiday Forum, Same Boat Music (Hannah Rayson), United Reformed Church Guide and Scout Fellowship (Keith Morrison), 13th Bromley Boys Brigade, ROOTS for Churches, Wild Goose publications, and all those wonderful people across the United Reformed Church who were willing to have their photographs included in this publication.

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Hebrews 3:13

Babies and Toddlers Plus

Commemorate the past

Babies (parents and carers)

Pray

Treasure box prayers

Say 'Tap Tap Box, What's in the box? What is in the box for [Child's name]?' Lift the lid and the child picks out an object. Pray for something that relates to the object. Flowers – Creation; Heart – the people who love us; House – the place where we live.



Flap mats

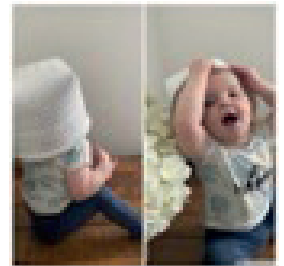
Lift the flap and say a prayer for the image under it. Photos of family; photos of pets; photos of food; photo of the world. You could make this using cardboard flaps or using the plastic flaps off packets of wipes glued to a piece of card.



Play

Pegs, pans and spoons music making

Place some pegs around a pan, with some wooden spoons and whisks to make some magical music.



Peepo

Play Peepo, it creates lovely giggles and smiles.

Messy play

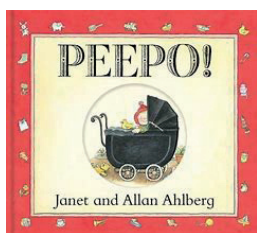
Sensory play

Jelly with figures in it; find the people.



Developmental milestone markers

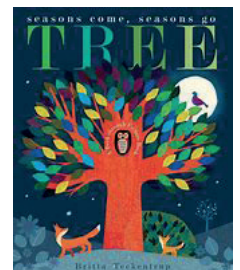
Make a handprint/footprint each month to mark the first year and keep as something to look back on.



Books

"Peepo!" by Janet and Allan Ahlberg
PEEPO! has become a classic for babies and toddlers

"Tree: Seasons Come, Seasons Go" by Patricia Hegarty
Explore the beauty of the changing seasons in this timeless peek-through book



Nursery rhyme

Hickory dickory dock

Hickory dickory dock

(Gently bounce baby to the beat)

The mouse ran up the clock *(run your fingers from baby's toes to their chin)*

The clock struck one *(clap once)*

The mouse ran down *(run your fingers down to baby's toes)*

Hickory dickory dock.

Hickory dickory dock

(Gently bounce baby to the beat)

The mouse ran up the clock

(run your fingers from baby's toes to their chin)

The clock struck two *(clap twice)*

The mouse went "boo!"

(cover baby's eyes with your hands then pull them away on boo!)

Hickory dickory dock.

Three... The mouse went "Weeee!"

(lift baby in the air on weeee)

Four... The mouse went "No more!"

(shake your finger no more!)

Celebrate the present

Babies (parents and carers)

Pray

People in my life cube

A plastic card box or a cube with images of your family and friends on it. Pray for the people as we throw the block.



Bubble wrap mat

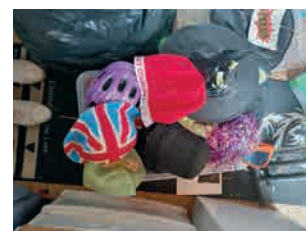
Lay out bubble wrap with images under it – as you crawl on the bubble wrap, find the people who help us and pray for them.



Play

Drop down games

Using a cardboard tube and some large pompoms. Rest the tube on a slope or tape it on to the fridge door. Pop the pom-pom in the top and watch it fall.



What's in there?

Cut a hole into a cardboard box and hide some toys inside. You could put some shredded paper or other material in to make it a lucky dip, depending on the child's confidence with the unknown. Get the children to put their hands in and pull out a surprise.

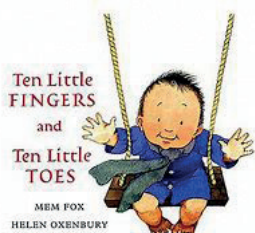
Messy play

Dress up role play

Big box of hats – who am I? Get out the dressing up box with lots of hats and be a new character each time you change the hat.

Who's there?

Collect four of the lids from wipe packets and place photos of family and friends under them, or simply create a flap to lift over the photo by cutting some card and sellotaping it to a piece of paper with the images on.



Book

"Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes" by Mem Fox and Helen Oxenbury
All over the world, babies are different. Yet in some ways they are very much the same: each one has ten little fingers and ten little toes – to play with, to tickle, to wave. Each child is special.

Nursery rhyme

The baby hokey cokey
You put your arms up
You put your arms down
You put your arms up
And you wave them all around
You tickle, tickle, tickle
And you wiggle, wiggle, wiggle
God loves everyone!

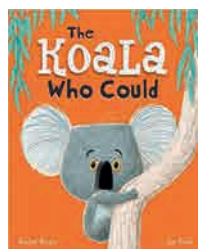
You put your legs up
You put your legs down
You put your legs up
And you wave them all around
You tickle, tickle, tickle
And you wiggle, wiggle, wiggle
God loves everyone!

You put your baby up
You put your baby down
You put your baby up
And you wave them all around
You tickle, tickle, tickle
And you wiggle, wiggle, wiggle
God loves everyone!

Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, turn around,
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, touch the ground.
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, reach up high,
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, wink one eye.
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, touch your nose,
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, touch your toes.
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, shut the door,
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, count to four.
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, climb the stairs,
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, say your prayers.
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, turn out the light,
Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, say goodnight.

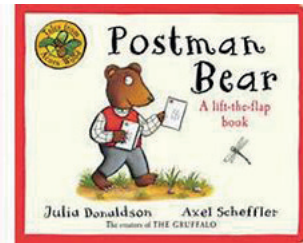
Book

"The Koala Who Could" by Rachel Bright
In a wonderful place, at the breaking of dawn, where the breezes were soft and the sunshine was warm, a place where the creatures ran wild and played free ... A Koala called Kevin clung to a tree.



Book

"Postman Bear" by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler
Bear is writing letters to his friends. But what could his letters be about? Lift the flaps and join Frog, Squirrel and Mole for Bear's special surprise!



Create the future

Babies (parents and carers)

Pray

Bubble prayers

Blow bubbles and let your baby catch them. As they pop, say a prayer for all your dreams and hopes for the child as they grow up.



Painted footprint prayers

Make a path of footprints and walk along it. Each step you take, pray for the roads that you will travel as you go on a journey with Jesus.



Play

Building towers

Make towers of unbreakable pots (old yogurt pots or plastic tubs). Encourage your children to grow as a strong tower with Jesus.

Ribbon waving

Gather some coloured ribbon and stuff them into a plastic bottle with a hole in the lid or paper tube. Pull them out one at a time. Wave the ribbons and talk about celebrating God's love.



Messy play

Dream catcher sensory

Inside an umbrella, attach some dangling feathers to make a dream catcher which will hold all the dreams you have for the baby and hold them safe.

Catch a star

Create some stars, place blobs of paint on them and insert into a zip lock bag, then let your baby have some fun squishing the bag and watching the colours spread. Display the stars afterwards as a reminder of the star they are and the stars they can reach for in the future.

Nursery rhyme

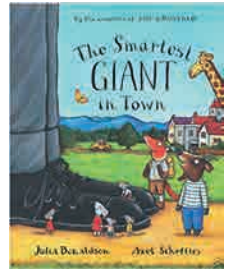
This little light of mine

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.
All around the neighbourhood, I'm going to let it shine.
All around the neighbourhood, I'm going to let it shine.
All around the neighbourhood, I'm going to let it shine.
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.
Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm going to let it shine.
Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm going to let it shine.
Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm going to let it shine.
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.

Book

"The Smartest Giant in Town" by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler

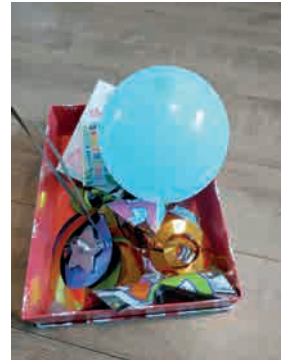
A lovely rhyming book, which has a wonderful story of generosity and kindness.



Jubilee – a time to share and celebrate

Party trays

A tray with lots of things which relate to parties to explore.



Balloon fun

Hang some balloons in a doorway and have fun with them. Or make a party popper and have some sensory fun by making a cardboard cone open at both ends and covering the smaller open end with a piece of balloon material cut from the bottom of an unused balloon. Tie a knot in the balloon. Fill the cone with confetti or bits of paper, then pull on the knot to stretch the balloon. Let go, and watch the paper fly up in the air.



Sharing

Roll a ball to each other; pass the potato game; make a sock puppet and encourage the baby to share some things with it, saying "Thank you" after each sharing.

Create a comfy space and relax – jubilee is a time of reflections and restoration, so just relax.

Nursery rhyme

Clap clap clap your hands

Clap clap clap your hands
Clap your hands together
Clap clap clap your hands
Clap your hands together.

Jump jump jump up high
Jump way up in the sky
Jump jump jump up high
Jump way up in the sky.

You can easily substitute "clap" with any action word like stomp, jump, tap, wiggle. Alternatively, change hands to a different body part. In this version you could lift your baby up in the air too.

URC Children Plus

Commemorate the past

A memory jar

You will need:

- A glass jar
- Permanent felt pens
- Stickers or coloured tape.



What to do:

1. Decorate the jar and make a label.
2. Add items to your jar that help you to think of happy times and things to remember: a button from some clothes that are too small; things that you have collected, such as seashells, pebbles, feathers, and items you treasure; family photographs.
3. Get everyone in the family to join in so that you have a jar full of things that mean something special. As an alternative, you could use a shoebox.

Surprise “pass the parcel” game – celebrating family

Wrap up a parcel with lots of layers. Include items that belong to family members or remind you of family. Play a game of pass the parcel. As the layers unwrap, see if you can think of who the item reminds you of or belongs to. You could include photographs too.

Book



“Loved”

A book of the Lord’s prayer. A prayer said all over the world every day, beautifully presented and illustrated for young children.

Song

“Two little eyes to look to God”: www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxv-Gly-ahc

“From the top of my head to the tip of my toes”:
www.elevationkids.com/song/from-the-top



Potato head

Often, when we are born, we have no hair, but as we grow our hair grows too. God knows all about us and knows even the hairs on our head. Watch as your potato grows cress hair.

You will need:

- Large potato
- Cotton wool (or soil)
- Marker pen
- Cress seeds
- Spoon and knife.

What to do:

1. Cut a slice off both ends of the potato so that it can stand up by itself. Scoop a hollow into the top of the potato using a spoon. Use a marker pen to draw a face on your potato.

2. Fill the hollow with cotton wool or soil and water well. Cover the surface of the cotton wool or soil with seeds.
3. Place your potato on a windowsill and keep the seeds watered. Take a look each day and see how the seeds are growing. Each day you will notice something different. Once the shoots start to appear, they will grow quickly. In about a week, you should have some cress hair.

You can have fun giving your potato head a haircut.



Celebrate the present

Watching and growing salt crystals

You will need:

- Sugar paper or thin card
- Water
- Salt
- Container and spoon (for mixing salt solution)
- Tray or plate.

What to do:

1. Cut out some heart shapes or any shape you like from sugar paper or thin card. Lay the shapes on a plate. Add four dessert spoons of salt to a container and fill it up with warm water. Stir the water until all the salt has dissolved – this may take quite a while but it is fun stirring and watching as the water clears.
2. Pour some of the salt solution over the shapes until they are just covered. Place the plate somewhere warm and leave overnight. The next day you will see that crystals are starting to form. As the water evaporates, so the surface of the shapes will become covered with crystals.
3. Put the shapes somewhere to dry and then you can use them to make a glittery picture. As an alternative, you could put a hole through the top and thread on some string to make a loop for a hanging decoration.
4. Using the same salt solution, pour it into a glass. Make fun shapes together from pipe cleaners and then suspend from a pencil into the salt solution. Watch over the next few days as crystals appear and snowflake shapes hang from the shapes.
5. Talk about how we grow and change and how we need each other as we grow.



Sunflower prayer

God helps me grow.

Cut out some petals from coloured paper. Cut out a stem and some leaves. Cut out a circle or heart to make the centre.

As you make the flower, sticking on the petals, use this as a time to pray together. Take each petal and think of someone or something to talk to God about. Know that God is always with you and loves you.

Dear God, please help...
Dear God, please bless...
Dear God, thank you...



Book



"The Tiny Seed" by Eric Carle

This book follows the journey of a tiny seed right through until it becomes a fully grown flower creating seeds of its own.

Create the future

Watch me grow tree height chart

Using brown paper or card from a box, cut out a tree trunk shape. Cut out some green shapes to make the top of the tree or paint some leaves onto white paper. You can decorate this with some stickers or shapes cut from paper. Stick this to a wall or door and use the height chart throughout the year to see how you grow.



Prayer bag

Fill a bag or backpack with various items to help you pray together:

- *Building bricks* – build a tower. Each time you add a brick, share with God something you hope for as you grow.
- *Bubbles* – blow some bubbles and share with God your hopes for the world.
- *Playdough* – shape the playdough into something you'd like God to keep safe, especially something in creation.
- *Happy and sad faces* – with the sad face, tell God about the things that make you sad. With the happy face, talk to God about the things that make you happy.
- *Teddy bear* – give your teddy a cuddle, say thank you to God for the people who love you and pray for those people who need love to help them have a better future.
- *Plasters* – ask God to help people who are poorly.
- *Candles* – stick the birthday candles into something firm such as an orange. Light a candle for each person in your family. Say their names and ask God to bless them. Blow out the candles.



Songs

"I am Walking": a great action song to celebrate God's love.

www.elevationkids.com/song/i-am-walking

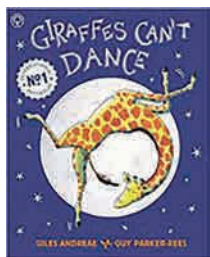
"We're gonna clap our hands": a song of praise and celebration

www.youtube.com/watch?v=TG1I6HpvcNs

"God's Love": <https://youtu.be/71CKY6boK8c>



Books



“Giraffes Can’t Dance”

A modern-day parable – a story celebration of what we can do when we find our own tune!

“The invisible string”

An invisible string made of love. Even though you can’t see it with your eyes, you can feel it deep in your heart, and know that you are always connected to the ones you love.



You can find lots of prayer ideas, activities, stories and challenges in our weekly resource “Families on Faith Adventures at Home”, which you can find on www.urc.org.uk/your-faith/children-young-people/families-on-faith-adventures-at-home/. In particular, you may want to use the session written on the theme of Jubilee in Leviticus 25, which was published for the first week of January 2022.

Hymn

Good to us

*We rejoice in your goodness, God,
Your love endures forever!
We rejoice in your goodness, God,
Your love endures forever!*

Oh, give thanks to Him,
Bring your praises to Him,
He is God, He is great, He is good to us!
Every living thing
Come together and sing,
He is God, He is great, He is good to us!

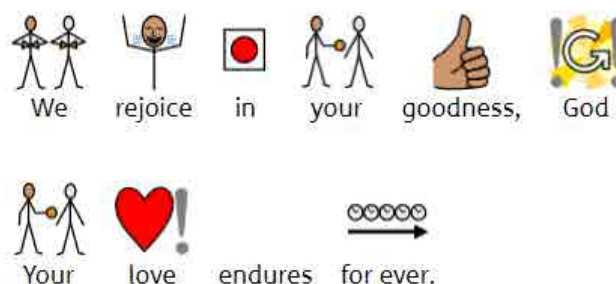
Chorus (with optional harmony until the end)

When the morning comes,
While there’s breath in our lungs,
Every day, we can say, He is good to us!
When our work is done
There’s a song to be sung,
Every day, we can say, He is good to us!

Chorus

In the highs and lows,
All the places we go,
In it all, we can know, He is good to us!
As we change and grow
We are never alone,
In it all, we can know, He is good to us!

Chorus x 2



Words and Music by Mark and Helen Johnson ©
2019 Out of the Ark Ltd, Middlesex TW12 2HD, CCLI
Song No. 7125727

This song, together with “Celebrate”, has been included with kind permission from Sameboat Music who produce original songs for school-aged children and for intergenerational use in schools and churches. The music for these is available on their website sameboatmusic.com and there is a BSL signed version of this song, “Good to Us”, on www.youtube.com/watch?v=lu5JIGofBqQ

URC Children: play, pray, make, think

Play

United

Form two or more teams. Spread each team out in a line with a gap between each team member and a chair at each end, a short distance away from the team members at each end of the line. When the leader shouts “UNITE”, the front person from each team has to weave in and out of their team members until they get to the back of the line. They grab the last person by the hand and the two run together round the chair at the back, in and out of their team members to the front of the line, round the chair at the front, and then in and out of their team members until they get to the back again. When they get there, the most recent person to have joined the chain grabs the hand of the last person in the line and the game continues. Once all team members have joined the chain, the team runs round the two chairs and back to their place, then sits down in a line, holding hands, and shouts “UNITED!” The first team to finish is the winner. The game reminds us that everyone is included in the URC.

Re-formed

Split the group into teams of 5-8 people – if your group is only small, stay as one team and make the game a challenge for the whole group. Using every member of your team, use your bodies to form the letters to make the following words. You could take photos of the completed words to make a display about the things God’s people do together. The words to make are: pray, read, learn, serve, share, eat, love, and URC. Remember, everybody in the team must be included to form the word, nobody must be left out. Once every team has completed the first word, they will ‘reform’ to make the next!



To each their own

Each member of the group needs a balloon. All the balloons should be the same colour, shape and size. Each member should write their name in small print on their balloon. (if your group is small, throw a few extra balloons into the mix with nothing written on them). Now play some music and bat all the balloons up in the air while the music is playing so that all the balloons are muddled up. Explain that when the music stops, each person has to find the balloon with their name on it. Chaos should ensue. Now play the game again, but encourage the group just to find any balloon with a name on it and then to give it to the person it belongs to. This challenge will almost certainly prove much quicker.

Equal shares

Split the group into two teams, the gatherers and the sharers. The gatherers’ home base is behind a line or rope on the floor, the sharers are out in the rest of the room. Place three buckets in the main part of the room and scatter ball-pit balls or beanbags or even sweets around the floor all over the main part of the room. Explain that the game will last five minutes and set a timer. The aim of the game is for the gatherers to gather as many of the items as they can and put them on the floor in their home base area. The challenge for the sharers is to gather as many of the items as they can and put them in the buckets. They need to try to get the same number of items in each bucket (they may want to think of a strategy for doing



this). Gatherers may take things out of buckets, sharers may take things from the gatherers' home base, but everyone may only carry one item at a time.

The baton of faith

This is a straightforward relay race, but instead of using a baton, use either a Bible or a cross to pass from one to the next. Before the race, read the passage from Hebrews about running the race and talk about how to run effectively you need to do some warm up exercises and stretches (which we could liken to holy habits) and then keep your eye on the target, in this case taking up the 'baton' and passing it on. Talk about how we can pass on our story of faith to others.

Pray

This is the church

Hold your hands palms up and push together so that the fingers interlock on the palm side of your hand. Turn your hands over and bring your wrists together so that your interlocked fingers are tucked inside and your two thumbs meet side by side.

God, thank you for your church, for the people who meet together in your name. For the people of the past, the present and the future who come together to make your church.

Keeping your hands in the same position, lift the two index fingers so that they point up.

Help us always to look to you and listen to you.

Pull the thumbs apart as though they are a double door opening outwards.

Help us to open the doors to invite everyone into your family and to let your good news out into all the world.

Continue separating and turning your hands so that the palms are up and the interlocked fingers are pointing upwards like lots of people.

So that everyone may know your love

Wiggle your fingers

And celebrate together.

Make two fists, slightly apart, with thumbs up, then bring them together to meet in front of you.

Amen

God loves us the way God made us.

Open with: **Thank you, God, that you made each of us differently. God loves us the way God made us.** You can add your own prayers to include different attributes of each of the member of the group. Here are some examples: God made me tall... God made me small... God made me to be good at football... God made me to sing/dance... God made me to wear glasses... God made me good with my hands... God made me with ginger/blonde/brown... hair...

Close with: **Thank you, God, for making each of us different. Amen**

Matchbox prayers

Use an empty matchbox or make one out of scrap card. Into your matchbox place something old to represent the past (maybe a button off some clothing that is no longer fit to wear or a small old piece of jewellery), a sunflower seed to represent hope for the future, a fingerprint on a piece of card to represent the present, a cross (could be made from a pipe cleaner or cut from card) to represent our faith and the God who is with us at all time, a few linked paperclips to remind us of the things that chain people down (such as debt, hunger, persecution, worry) and a piece of dried fruit to represent God's good gifts to us. Hold your matchbox and examine the things in it and pray: Help us to remember, to hope, to thank, to share and to serve. AMEN

Building block prayers

Each person needs three pieces of Lego. Hold the first piece in your hand. Think of someone who has helped you on your faith or life journey in the past. Thank God for that person and

for what they did for you. Hold the second piece of Lego in your hand and think of someone who encourages you now. Thank God for that person and ask God to bless and encourage them. Hold the third piece of Lego in your hand and think of someone you know who needs God's love and your encouragement now. Ask God to be with them and to help you to do something to make a difference. Now everyone in the group can join their pieces together randomly and say: Holy Spirit, build your church. Amen



Break the chains

Think of all the things that hold people back from living the life God wants for them. Think of things like poverty, debt, lack of education, abuse, slavery, oppression, fear, worry, illness, sadness, prejudice etc. Write each thing on a strip of paper and link them together to form a paper chain. Encourage the members of the group to pray if possible, or a leader might look at each link in the chain in turn and say "God of love, we remember people who are held back by ... and pray that you will bring them peace and freedom" Then a group member can rip apart that link while the others say "May we break their chains and set them free!"

Make

Logo treats

Make a URC logo by forming a fish shape and a cross shape out of a pliable material and then linking them together. You could use fimo or air-dry clay and fit a safety pin to the back to make a badge to wear. Find out about the different URC logos – do you want to make your fish blue like the logo for the whole of the URC or do you want to make it green like the logo for URC Children? Alternatively, you could use a bread, cheese straw or gingerbread recipe to make dough and roll it into long sausage shapes to mould into shape. Why not use writing icing or pieces of fruit to decorate it when it's cooked?

Wipe clean slate

Cut two identical shapes out of thick scrap cardboard approx. A4 size – maybe a heart shape to remind you of love, but it can be any shape you think would be appropriate. Take a sheet of plain paper – you could use the plain side of some scrap paper - cut it to the same shape and size and glue it onto one of the cardboard shapes. Take the other cardboard shape and carefully cut a shaped hole in it so that it is like a frame. Paint or decorate this shape.

Glue or tape a flat piece of plastic to the back of the shape to cover the hole. You can get flat plastic from used food containers, cake boxes etc but ensure you wash it first! Now glue the cardboard shape with the hole in it on top of the paper shape to create a wipe clean slate. You can write or draw on the plastic with dry wipe pens and then simply wipe it clean, creating a fresh start just like we have with God every day and like Jubilee represents.



Time machine

Use junk modelling or a drawing app on a tablet to design your own time machine. Where will you go – forward into the future or back into the past? While you are making your time machines, talk together about what you think the world might look like in the future and what the church of the future might look like. What could be good about the future? What was good about the past that we've lost sight of now? What could be less good about the future? What was less good about the past that we do better now? What can we do now to ensure the future is the best it can possibly be?

Jubilee bracelets / necklaces

You will need:

- Scrap paper
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Cocktail sticks
- Paint
- String or old shoelace.



What to do:

1. Cut triangles of paper approx 30cm long and about 2cm wide at their widest point. You will need fifty of these in total.
2. Take each piece of paper in turn and roll it round a cocktail stick, starting from the widest end and adding a bit of glue as you go to help the paper stick together to form a bead. Try to roll it evenly so it forms a bead shape. Alternatively you could just purchase ready-made wooden beads.
3. When you have made your beads, paint or colour seven of them blue and one gold. Allow them to dry. If you want to, you could also varnish them.
4. Thread your finished beads onto the string or shoelace, putting a blue one as every seventh bead and a gold one to finish. Form the string or shoelace into a tight circle and tie it off.

Another way of making beads is to place pieces of hollow pasta (e.g. macaroni or mini penne pasta) into a ziplock bag with a squirt of tempera or acrylic paint. Close the bag and squish the pasta around inside until it is completely covered with paint. Tip out onto a baking tray covered with kitchen towels or greaseproof paper and allow to dry for 1-2 hours.

Window on the future

Make and decorate a window frame out of scrap cardboard, about the size of a piece of A4 paper. Glue it onto a sheet of plain paper. Alternatively you may want to use old picture frames from a charity shop which have pictures in them that are unlikely to sell – you can paint over the pictures. Within the frames, paint or draw or collage a picture of what the world or the church might look like in the future for God to say “it is good”. Talk about what small steps and bigger steps we might take to help this future come about.

Think

Take one of the Bible passages from the section entitled “Back to the Word”. Read it together and talk about what it might mean for us today. Does anything surprise us about the passage or make us question? What do we like about the passage? What might we do or do differently in response to what we’ve read? Perhaps you could write a prayer, a poem, a rap, a song about something you’ve read and which has made an impression on you. Perhaps you might want to engage in some action or do something from the Walking the Way challenge in this booklet.

URC Children Plus

– going deeper

These pages are to support you in exploring the past, present, and future of three themes: Jubilee, the place of children in the URC, and our faith as Christians.

In 2022, the URC celebrates its 50th anniversary, its golden jubilee year. There will be joyous celebrations as we join together to commemorate the past, celebrate the present and create the future.

Exploring jubilee: exploring the concepts of fresh starts, brighter futures, and confession.

Things to discuss and explore:

Commemorate the past

What was it then? Jubilee is a Biblical concept. Every 50 years things were “put right”, the reset button was hit for a year. Slaves were set free, land and property were returned to their owners, and no-one used the land for one year for crops in order to give the land a rest. All debts were cleared.

Celebrate the present

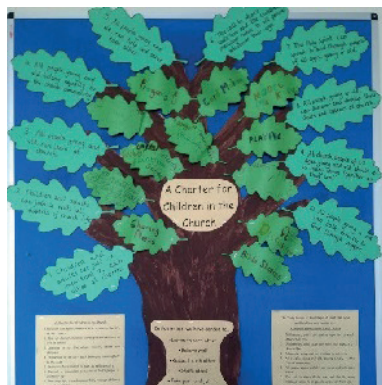
What is it now? The millennium saw people calling for a jubilee year, to drop all the debt from third world countries and more. Was lockdown a jubilee year? We saw the waters clearer as we left the oceans alone, fish returned to the canals in Venice, animals and creatures returned to areas as people were out and about less. It seems we look for opportunities to put things right. What sort of things are individuals, churches, governments doing now that tie in with our theme of jubilee?

Create the future

What could it be in the future? Dream big dreams. What could this look like, how can we plan and live better to give jubilee opportunities?

Jubilee is classically a moment of “re-set”. John Bradbury, General Secretary of the United Reformed Church, has asked: “Are we called in this moment to ‘re-set’ the life of the United Reformed Church better to enable us and those who will follow after us to respond to the call to be faithful?”

Think about how we might make our voice heard and make a difference.



Things to make and do

Jubilee jigsaws

Jubilee jigsaws can be designed to explore any theme over past, present, and future – one jigsaw for each aspect. Give each child or small group a blank jigsaw (giant ones work best). As they explore and use their detective skills to find out about jubilee past, present and future, they can create their designs on each jigsaw. If you use the same basic jigsaw pattern, the pieces could then be interchangeable to enable discussion with older groups. You could use a jigsaw that you as a leader have already populated or designed to help explore the themes, or the group can design their own once they have explored the theme for themselves.

How can you use these jigsaws with others in the church to encourage discussion?

Exploring the place of children in the URC

Exploring the place of children in the URC over the past decades, how it has increased and developed to now, and dreaming about what it might look like in the future.

Things to discuss and explore



Fact

More than 60,000 people worship in our churches each week, including over 13,000 who are under 18, and many more take part in the weekday activities of the churches, including 30,000 under 18's.

Commemorating the past

What was it then? The URC begins in 1972; in 1973 FURY (Fellowship of the United Reformed Youth) is established, later to become URC Youth; Children's Assembly used to gather alongside General Assembly; the non-uniformed organisation Pilots was formed to serve children and young people in 1936. In 1990 the URC adopted the Charter for Children, which reminded us that ALL are part of the body of Christ, equal partners in faith and worship.

www.urc.org.uk/images/Children-and-youth/documents/Charter_for_Children_in_the_Church.pdf

Celebrating the present

What is it now? Children's forums, youth executives, Youth Assembly, hearing the voices, celebrating children (Lundie). The Lundie Medal is awarded each month to highlight and celebrate children and young people who have made a difference through playing their part in the mission of God. In 2020, work began to rewrite the Charter for Children, moving us towards an increasingly inclusive, intergenerational church. URC Youth bring the concerns, passions, and gifts of young people throughout the life of the Church.

Creating the future

What could this look like in the future? Intergenerational? Equal partners? Why not have a go at writing a new Charter for Children in your church, or using our easy-read version to do an audit of your church together. Maybe your church could even think about joining the Children and Youth Friendly Church scheme:

www.urc.org.uk/your-church/children-and-youth-friendly-church-scheme/

This year sees the launch of URC Children, mirroring URC Youth but bringing together all the children and children's groups associated with the URC as one family, part of the whole Church with a voice and an identity. What are your dreams for children in the Church? What would you like General Assembly to know? What would you like URC Children to be like?

Make a life-story book

Scrapbooking is a fun activity. Have a go at collecting and celebrating the children in the URC or in your own church: collect the stories, URC stories, your own stories, and your church story and create a book – like a 'life story' book but a 'faith story' book instead. Don't forget to leave some blank pages for the stories that haven't happened yet.

Craft for big dreams

Get crafty and make some dream clouds. They can show what your hopes and dreams are for the present and the future. It is a chance to hear God's prophetic voice: What is God saying to us now? Here's an example of a dream cloud.

Consider, what is it you are passionate about? What change do you dream of? What changes do you want to see in the world? As you create your cloud, consider what you can do to bring this change about?

You will need:

- Two pieces of felt or material
- Cardboard
- Needle and thread
- Cotton wool or other material for stuffing
- Scissors
- A fabric pen or similar marker
- Ribbon.

What to do:

1. Make a cloud-shaped template on thick card and use it as a pattern to cut two pieces of material.
2. Choose which side of the cloud you want to decorate/embroider with your message.
3. Draw the message (e.g. "I dream of equality for all"), then either decorate it with pens or embroider over the words. You might want to write this on a separate piece of material and sew it on.
4. Now begin to sew both parts together (a blanket stitch works best), leaving a small gap to fill the cloud.
5. Fill the cloud with the filling you have chosen and close the gap in the cloud.
6. Add a piece of ribbon for hanging it up.
7. Hang it somewhere you will see it every day to remind you to be a part of the change you want to see. Or, you can hang it somewhere to inspire and challenge others.



Exploring our faith

Exploring how our faith fits into the context of a “cloud of witnesses”

Commemorating the past

What was it then? Hebrews 11 looks at the heroes of the faith in the Bible. What Bible stories do we know and remember? Which heroes of faith do we find most inspiring or relate to most? How did the Bible come to be written?

Celebrating the present

What is it now? Read Hebrews 3:13. How do we encourage each other, learn and grow together? What brought us to where we are now? How do we experience, explore and express our journey with Jesus through our everyday lives? Lundie Medals are one example of how we encourage each other (www.bit.ly/YoutubeLundie). Can you think of others?

Creating the future

What does your faith look like in the future? Read Jeremiah 29:11. “I know the plans I have for you.” What is the future of the Church and how might it develop? Will it always look the same or will it change? How can you spread the good news of Jesus to others in the future? What does God have in store for you?

Giant faith timeline

Think about how this could be conveyed – could you use pictures, photographed tableaux, crafts, video, a graffiti wall? Remember that it doesn’t stop at the end of the Bible!

Now Bible

The Bible stopped at a certain point but the stories of faith continue. What sort of stories would you include in the Bible if you were writing it today? Collecting stories of faith and make a “Now” Bible.

Other ideas (which could be used in any of the sections above)

Stained glass windows

To show the story or explore the theme – draw it, create a mosaic or collage, paint it, design it digitally. However you decide to make it, follow these steps to create as you explore together:

1. Agree/introduce the theme, what we are exploring.
2. Once you have explored the theme, agree on images or words that summarise your findings.
3. Begin to design your window in draft form.
4. Get creative and create the final product.
5. Agree a title for your window.



6. Decide where is best to put it as a celebration as well as to encourage others to reflect.
7. Take lots of pictures and send them in to **children.youth@urc.org.uk** so we can celebrate with you!

Living libraries

We don't often make time to tell each other our stories. A living library offers us the chance to share together. Individuals offer to tell their stories of faith, or of the Church (whichever theme you are exploring). It's important they write the story down and practise telling it briefly and practice using accessible language before the event.

Each living story sits at a coffee table with comfy chairs around it. On the table is a card with an engaging title of "the book": for example a person talking about how they found their faith whilst in prison might have the title, "I met God in Prison". It's also a good idea to have some visual aids or photos from the story on the table. As people arrive at the library, they are encouraged to wander and browse the stories on offer, stopping at the stories that they want to hear more about.

It's a lovely idea that can run for a whole day or a few hours. This is an excellent opportunity for intergenerational engagement – and remember, you don't need to be an adult to have a story to share!

Games

Jenga/towers

Exploring the layers and importance of firm foundations. This game could work well as an ice breaker for any of the themes explored. Challenge the group to either play a game of Jenga or build a high strong tower using giant Jenga bricks or something similar.

If it is a competition to see who can build the tallest tower, the group might be more focussed on building up and forget to consider their foundations. Once you have had some fun, wonder together. Here are a few questions to help:

- How did you decide to build your tower? What was important to you?
- What difficulties did you need to work with?
- What can this game tell us about how we build our faith/church/community?



If you are using Jenga, you could ask the group to write on the blocks the things that are important in keeping their faith strong. Then play the game again. This will enable a conversation around the importance of each block.

Display boards

To retell, inform, challenge, and interact with others in the church. Think about how you can present and display the things you create as a group. Place the display somewhere others who use the church can see it. Consider who the audience is likely to be and decide what you are encouraging them to think about.

You could add wondering questions to the display to encourage others to also get involved with the thinking. Or make it interactive, encouraging others to take part. For example, if you have made dream clouds, have the resources next to the display and invite others to add to the display or take one away and make as they consider the future.

Drama – a day of jubilee

Leviticus: 25 (ish)

Moses and child or young person with a trumpet

Moses: Alright, alright – you can stop now! Mayer will you put that trumpet down!

Mayer: But I am practising – you said play the trumpet loud ...

Moses: I know what I said – you can play the trumpet loud on ...

Mayer: Thank you.

Moses: Play the trumpet loud ON the seventh week of the seven times seven years – on the tenth day of the seventh month – (adding up on his fingers) that's 49 years.

Mayer: 49 years – I'll be (also adding up on his fingers) ... OLD!

Moses: Yes, yes, but that is not the main concern, is it? How am I going to explain all this to all the men down there?

Mayer: You could try the women and the children – they might be more understanding?

Moses: You may have something there...I am not convinced that they are going to take too kindly to this.

Mayer: Year of jubilee?

Moses: Yes this year of jubilee.

Mayer: You think God is serious then?

Moses: Well yes, of course God is serious – when is God not serious?

Mayer: When Abraham was told he and Sarah would have a baby and they were in old age – they were grandparents-age-old!

Moses: No. That was a significant moment in the history of our people.

Mayer: Maybe. But Sarah had a good giggle.

Moses: This is not helping. I have just been informed that after the years of work and toil of men...

Mayer: And women!

Moses: And women, labouring...

Mayer: And children!

Moses: Yes, all right. Men, women and children labouring hard in the fields. Building up their nice tiny little nest egg. Building up a business. Then, after fifty years, it is all to be returned from where it came.



Mayer: Yep, that sounds rough ...

Moses: And not only that, it seems they have to cancel all the debts still outstanding in some great big mortgage burning party!

Mayer: That's the celebration of the jubilee, is it?

Moses: It will not sound much like a celebration to all those landowners and businessmen.

Mayer: And business women ...

Moses: Sorry, my bad, and business women of course. (turning to Mayer)

Mayer: Well, I think this jubilee thing would sound OK to my mum!

Moses: What do you mean?

Mayer: Well, she says when she treats me and my brothers well, as the gifts from God we are, she says we seem to get on and do better.

Moses: And ... your point?

Mayer: Well, her point to my father is that if we treat others, our employees, like gifts of God, then they will work harder and business will be better.

Moses: Quite a businesswoman, your mum.

Mayer: She says when we were in Egypt we were treated like rubbish – so now we are free, we need to be thankful to God and give to God what belongs to God.

Moses: Yes, and all that moaning and griping in the desert when they were saved from Pharaoh and his armies. If only they had given thanks instead and realised how they were gifts of God – well, they would have been less unhappy.

Mayer: It seems to me this year of jubilee could really be a jubilee celebration.

Moses: Giving back the land to God.

Mayer: Giving back all we have enjoyed from God.

Moses: Being able to start again – helping others to start again.

Mayer: After all it does all belong to God...doesn't it?

Moses: After all is said and done...it all belongs to God first – it is our common history.

Mayer: So can I play my trumpet then?

Moses: As loud as you like, Mayer – we are off to tell everyone about the celebration that is Jubilee. And I might ask your mum to write up the business plan.

Mayer: OK. But she doesn't like my trumpet playing any more than you do.

The Revd Roger Jones



Additional needs

When exploring the theme with children and young people with additional needs, it is important to remember that each is an individual and to adapt the activity to fit individual levels of understanding and different sensory needs. To explore this theme, we will focus on what the past is on a personal level as it is a good way of introducing history on a more general basis. We will think about what we know about our church and the people in it. We will think about Jubilee as a party, but also as an opportunity to put things right.

Commemorate the past

Look at things that the child/young person had as a baby and things they like now – being sensitive to the fact that some things may not have changed or may even have regressed. Can you order clothes into a timeline from baby clothes to now? Can you sequence photographs? Talk about changing and growing. “Thank you, God, for being with me as I grow.”

Create a sensory tray containing different items, some of them old and some of them new. Can you sort them into old and new? Or just explore the different items. Try to use as many natural materials as possible.

Celebrate the present

Something old or something new game

1. Wrap up two presents, one containing something that already belongs to the child/young person and one containing something that is new to them. (Encourage parents/carers to provide the two items, or perhaps it is an opportunity for the church to give a gift.) Use bright wrapping paper and ribbons or newspaper and string to wrap – each can have its own sensory benefit – but make sure that both are wrapped the same. Encourage the child/young person to feel it and shake it before they open it and see whether they can guess whether it is something they know already or something new. Then open it together. Talk about new and familiar. “Thank you, God, for everything you have given us and everything you are going to give us.”
2. Use a cube with people from the church pictured on it – those that the child/young person is likely to meet that day. Ideally, the pictures will be laminated and attached to the cube with velcro so that they can be pulled off and seen more closely. Throw the cube in the air and see whose picture lands uppermost. Take that picture and see whether you can find the person pictured in it.
3. Make a picture trail around your church with photos of things to find, then travel around the building to locate those things. How many can you find and name? You could use Talking Tiles if you have some (www.inclusive.co.uk/talking-tiles-p6950). Put a photo on the top of the tile and record someone saying the word for that item, then as you find each thing in the church, encourage the child/young person to choose between two photos and press the talking tile for the right item.

4. Fill a suitcase with things from your church – communion plate and chalice/cup, Bible, kneeler, offertory plate, hymn book, musical instrument if you use them, cross, microphone etc. Create an air of excitement by singing “What’s in the case? What’s in the case? Let’s see, let’s see, what’s in the case?” (to the tune of “The Farmer’s in the Dell”) and tapping the case twice between each line. Then pull one thing out and explore it. Can you enact how that thing is used in church?

Create the future

This is about having a say, finding your voice. Encourage children/young people to sort things into like/don’t like or smiley face/sad face. Give them opportunities to choose what happens in a session, what song to sing next, what game to play, what snack to eat by making “I want...” sentences, either verbally or using pictures to make choices. Enable them to have a choice recognised by the church e.g. choosing a hymn or song for the Sunday service that everyone will sing, or writing a prayer together that they or someone else can read or say or sign in the service. Can they create a contribution for the Church Meeting or for the Elders Meeting which shares their feelings about church?

Making things right and fair/fresh start

Mix different things in one basket or in a pile on the floor e.g. Duplo, toy cars, pencils etc. Encourage children/young people to sort them and put them where they belong or into separate baskets. Talk about how sometimes we get in a bit of a muddle but God gives us the chance to start again. Similarly, you could play with wipe-clean “slates” or whiteboards where you can scribble all over them and then wipe them clean.

Play turn-taking games

Set up a teddy-bears’ picnic and give out an unfair amount of food – see if there’s a reaction. Ask who’s hungry? Who needs more? Can you share the goodies out? Count as you put them out. Maybe try the same activity with the children and some fruit – can they share them out fairly? Ring a bell and cheer when you have finished. Remember to include the leaders! “Jesus, help us share things fairly and help others.”

Party time

It’s time to celebrate with a party. Encourage the children/young people to plan the party by choosing music, games, food etc. There needs to be dancing, too, and dressing up or decorating the room/wheelchairs/walking or standing frames/tables etc. Be aware that some children may be noise sensitive and need some support, and many may be afraid of balloons. Also be aware of food allergies or sensitivities and ensure there is something suitable for everyone.

Sing together

On the following page is a song that you could sing and do actions to as you celebrate together.



 Sing a song,
  sing a joyful song,
  sing a joyful song to celebrate

 Jesus is alive
  you know,
  he's risen from the dead

 He was crucified, but now
  he's risen like he said.

 Clap your hands,
  clap your hands like this,
  clap your hands like this to celebrate

 Jump up and down,
  up and down and around,
  up and down and around to celebrate

 Dance to the beat,
  to the beat of the drum,
  to the beat of the drum to celebrate

 Wave your hands,
  wave your hands in the air,
  wave your hands in the air to celebrate....

 Sing a song,
  sing a joyful song,
  sing a joyful song to celebrate

Words and Music by Mark and Helen Johnson, © 1995 & 2015 Out of the Ark Ltd, Middlesex TW12 2HD, CCLI Song No. 1574905

Outdoor worship

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Church has found new ways to worship away from buildings. This was generally done in two polar opposite ways, either via a screen or outside! However, did we do outdoor worship or did we worship outdoors?

Outdoor worship is simply transferring what we do in the buildings outside; for some it may be called an open-air service. The sounds, smells and sights of the location you choose will have an effect on those who attend. But what makes “worshipping outdoors” different?

When we worship outdoors, we engage with God’s wonderful creation as we delve into his word. We use the smells, sounds, sights, and textures of our surroundings as a primary source of worship material rather than a subtle secondary. There are many ways to include our outside surroundings to enhance our praise and worship, whether we are located in an urban or rural setting. Here are a few ideas to use or adapt for your own group and setting.

Activities

Back to basics

This great activity works best in a rural environment, especially around the campfire, but can easily be adapted to be done around a firepit or charcoal BBQ. (A gas BBQ may work but better test it out first!)

Find a thin, yet strong, and long twig around a meter long and 1cm thick (you may need to gather this in advance). Wrap foil around the end of the stick, covering the tip and about 15cm. Take a lump of bread dough (see recipe below) and roll it into a ‘snake’ approximately 2cm thick. Tightly wrap the dough around the stick over the foil to make a spiral. Now it is time to start cooking! Hold the opposite end of the stick tightly and turn regularly as you cook the dough over the embers, having the following discussion as it cooks:



What does each person think they need in order to survive during a day? A week? A year?

There will be a variety of answers. If they mention food, explore further – if they could only have one food for the rest of the year, what would they choose? Humans actually need only food, shelter and water to survive and, although sweets and lasagna are lovely, the one food we really need is bread. Bread comes in many shapes and styles. How many different types of bread can your group name?

Discuss what Christians need to survive. Answers might vary from the Bible to church and prayer, and maybe even after service tea and cake! However, what Christians really need is Jesus in their lives. Jesus called himself the bread of life and those who go to him will never go hungry (John 6:35). Like pizza and pets enrich our lives, practices such as reading the Bible and going to church enrich our spiritual lives. But what we need is Jesus! Spend time in prayer, thanking God for his son, the bread of life.

Want to go deeper? Use the bread you have cooked and some grape juice and share a meal together, talking about how Jesus shared bread and wine with his disciples. Maybe a minister could join and lead a short act of communion.

Recipe

Bread

You will need:

- Plain flour
- 1 mug
- A pinch of salt
- 1 tbsp of olive oil
- Cold water.



What you do:

1. Mix the flour and salt together in a large bowl. Pour in the oil and a few splashes of water, then bring the mix together with your hands.
2. Add more water a little at a time to form a dough. If you over do it with the water, don't worry, just add a little more flour.
3. Dust your hands with a bit of flour, pull off a quarter of the dough and roll it between your palms to form a long sausage shape.

Use your senses!

Being outside can often bring our senses alive: hearing and seeing wildlife, smelling the freshness (or the manure), tasting the fruit, and touching the various textures the great outdoors has to offer. However, have you ever used your senses to worship God? Here are a few examples of how to use God's creation and your senses to worship God.



Hear – be silent for a few minutes, then discuss what everyone could hear. Likely answers include people, vehicles, farm animals. Now repeat the activity but this time listen more carefully. Answers may now include birds, insects, leaves, distant farm animals, people breathing etc. Read 1 Kings 19:11-13 together and then spend time together in prayer asking for help to drown out the loud distracting noises to allow us to focus more on God.

Touch – find a leaf. Slowly explore the leaf, running fingers along its veins. Notice how, although the veins vary in thickness and length, they are all so delicate on their own. Despite their delicateness, each vein has a really important role in keeping the tree alive: they work together within the leaf, which produces food for the tree. Think about your role in the family/community/Church and whether you help them grow? How can you do more? Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 together and then spend time asking God to help you to fulfil the role that God wants of you.

Sight – split into pairs. One partner should close their eyes (no cheating) whilst the other describes a small area of their surroundings using no more than ten clues. Then those who have their eyes closed should open them and guess where was being described. Did they get it right? Was it easy to describe/guess? Now swap roles but secretly instruct the new describers to describe precisely the same area but using up to ten completely new clues. Again, ask the second guesser to open their eyes and identify the area. Was it easy to describe/guess this time? How did the guesser guess?

Think about how someone might describe you in ten points. Would they describe themselves the same way? How would God describe us? Look at 1 Samuel 16:7 together and then spend time with God asking him to help us see with God's eyes.

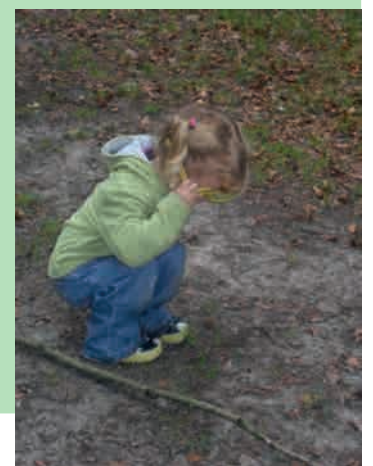


Smell – in advance, spend some time making a smell trail using something really smelly (fish, garlic, perfume), finishing with hiding the object somewhere in your area. Explain that you have hidden something in the area and ask them to find it using their noses only. Explain that their task was pretty easy as the smell was really fresh and it was a small area, but there are some animals that could find the item in an area many times bigger and over a week later. Animals use smell not only to find food but to find

friends and family and to decide whether someone/somewhere is safe. As much as we try, this is not something humans can do very well. In 2 Corinthians 2:15-17, Christians are described as “the pleasing aroma of Christ” in the world; improving the atmosphere and changing the environment we find ourselves in, creating a trail that will lead others to Christ. Spend time in prayer asking for help to shed the unpleasant and cover ourselves in a scent that pleases God and will help others to open their hearts to God.

Taste – in advance, prepare a banana for each person. Carefully slice a groove into the banana, leaving the skin attached at one end. Slice/crumble some chocolate into the groove, replace the skin, and wrap in tinfoil, creating a hook at one end. Using a stick or tongs, place your banana into the embers of a fire for five minutes, then hook the banana out, and leave to cool down a bit before opening and enjoying.

While the banana is cooking, ask people to describe a banana. Hand out the chocolate-filled bananas and ask: Does it look like a normal banana? Does it look good? (It is OK to say no!) Does it taste like a normal banana? Does it taste good? (Hopefully the answer is yes!)



Intergenerational worship

Service outline one

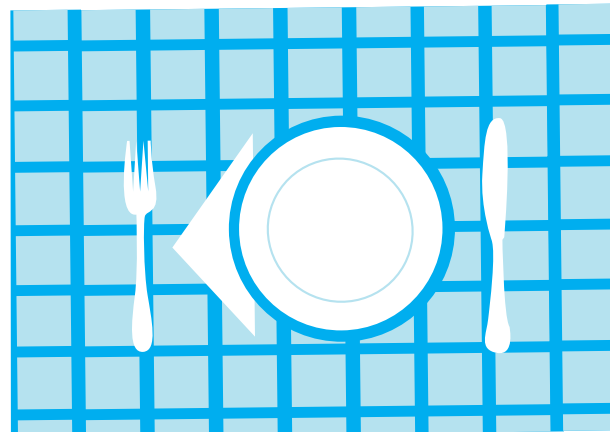
Aim: to create an act of worship in which all can share together and celebrate around the table.

Setting the space

Lay out a table or a picnic blanket with all the chairs around it. The table should be laid out ready for a celebration meal.

Invite everyone to bring a plate from their home, which will be used for the meal (have a pile of plates to be used for those who have not brought one).

Consider the meal you are having. Think about the implements being like “swords into ploughshares”. And how the plates offer images of our uniqueness, and our difference, though the use of a plate is the same.



Appetiser

The welcome could follow the greetings from Romans 16:3-15, and the welcomer introduces people to the service.

Welcome song – maybe this could be:

“The Trumpets Sound the Angels Sing” by Graham Kendrick; “Come all you vagabonds” by Stuart Townsend; “The Table” by Chris Tomlin; “The church is like a table” by Fred Kaan.

Starter

Opening prayer activity.

Offer three choices of prayerful song – maybe looking at the song suggestions in this booklet – and vote on which the congregation would most like to sing, having the music for the other two playing in the background while they engage in the prayer activity. Invite people to choose how they pray the prayer by setting up three tables which they can visit:

Prayer paper chains – Lay out enough strips of coloured paper for each member of the group to have one and encourage them to write a one-line thank you prayer. Fasten all the strips together to make a festive paper chain that you can hang across your meeting room.

Balloon prayers – Have ready a number of inflated balloons and a selection of permanent marker pens. Invite everyone to suggest one-line prayers and write two or three prayers on each balloon. Hang the balloons in clusters around your church or meeting room. These could be made as part of a special celebration service.

Flowers – Place a vase filled with water centrally. Scatter flowers on the table or floor around the vase. Explain that the flowers need to be put back in the container with the water in order

to live. We need to be in contact with God to be whole and to know life in its fullness. Ask everyone to pray, in silence, for people and situations they know that need the life-giving Spirit given by Jesus. Invite them to place one of the scattered flowers back in the vase as a token of their prayer, either in silence or with a brief explanation of their prayer. When the vase is full it can be placed on a table.

Drinks

The reading is a source of refreshment. Leviticus 25:8-28, Jeremiah 29:11, or Hebrews 3:13a

Main course

This is the chance for gaining some nourishment, and an opportunity to reflect on the reading, though wondering.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder what Jubilee means for you.
- I wonder how we can reflect Jubilee in our own lives.
- I wonder what we can do to make a difference in the future.

Dessert

Do our reactions to reflecting on the reading encourage us to make choices in how we might respond? What things will we do to make a change during a Jubilee year? What reparation are we making? Who do we want to see set free from the things which hold them back? Who do we owe a debt to? Where is God calling us as individuals, as families, as a congregation?

We might encourage a creative response here through art or writing poetry or prayers, a time of silent prayer, a writing of pledges or writing letters to MPs, or a suitable song or hymn to sing together.

Coffee

This is the sending out and the chance to chat and share together with a meal. This could be a “bring and share” meal which has been laid out as we come to worship, or a buffet or a formal meal provided by the church. Invite people to sit round the table and share together in an act of celebration.



Jubilee

Intergenerational service

Appetiser
Romans 16:3-15
Welcome song

Starter
Opening prayer activity
Please choose one of the options

Drinks
A reading for refreshment
Leviticus 25:8-28, Jeremiah 29:11 or Hebrews 3:13a

Main course
An opportunity to gain some nourishment and reflection through wondering

Dessert
Our response

Coffee
A chance to share together and celebrate our jubilee

Service outline two

Aim: to create an act of worship in which all can share together and celebrate around various tables. You might start with a prayer and you may wish to include some communal singing, and then encourage people to visit one or more of the tables as they feel comfortable.

Setting the space

Lay out the tables around the space. These can be different shapes and sizes: consider the shape of the table and its use.

- A working table would be a table where we do practical activity.
- A coffee table encourages conversation, so lots of wondering questions and activities to encourage the wondering.
- A formal table will be a chance for people to reflect more formally on the theme, maybe in the form of a Bible study type activity.
- A round table is a place where we would encourage everyone to join together in an activity which creates one outcome.
- A kitchen table is a place where we offer hospitality and refreshment. This could be a chance to do prayer activities or to share some actual refreshment.
- You could set each table to invite participants to consider and reflect on either an aspect of Jubilee or an aspect of anniversaries – or even a combination of the two. You may find activities in this book which are suitable for the tables or you may want to develop your own.

Examples of reflections on jubilee:

- Reflect on something that someone has done for you, for example a doctor, nurse, teacher, parents, friends.
- Reflect on what we owe to others. Do we need to give something back (for example, by helping others in the way we have been helped)?
- Reflect on what God or Jesus has done for us and how we might repay that gift (for example, forgiveness, and sharing our faith story with others)
- Reflect on how to repay our debt and the debts of others (for example, looking at material from JPIT)
- Reflect on the question: “What is a debt?”

Examples of reflections on anniversaries:

- One year is paper – letter writing or ripping up the IOU
- Ten years is tin – giving to others and cancelling their debt by giving to foodbanks
- Twenty years is china – the sharing of hospitality and sharing together over a meal
- Thirty years is pearl – maybe following the idea of an irritant and that a pearl is created from something which is irritating us. What can we make into a pearl?
- Forty years is ruby – what makes us see red? What makes us righteously angry and what can we do about it?
- Fifty years is gold – how can we share the material wealth we have with the people who need it the most? For example, what charities will we support this year?

The different tables need to have a range of activities on them which will engage all generations. If we are letter writing, for example, we encourage wondering and conversation about the letter we may write and who it is to. It may be that we have simple creative activities which will encourage everyone to think about the issue on the table. In prayer activities, we might think of creative ways of engaging in prayer together or individually. At the end of the act of worship, draw everyone together to share their reflections and their responses.

Back to the Word

The Year of Jubilee – Leviticus 25:8-12

Count off seven sabbath years. Count off seven times seven years.

The seven sabbath years add up to a total of 49 years. The tenth day of the seventh month is the day when sin is paid for. On that day blow the trumpet all through your land. Set the 50th year apart. Announce freedom all over the land to everyone who lives there. The 50th year will be a Year of Jubilee for you. Each of you must return to your own family property. And each of you must return to your own tribe. The 50th year will be a Year of Jubilee for you. Do not plant anything. Do not gather what grows without being planted. And do not gather the grapes from the vines you have not taken care of. It is a Year of Jubilee. It will be holy for you.

Eat only what the fields produce.

Commemorate the past – Romans 16:3-15

Greet Priscilla and Aquila. They work together with me in serving Christ Jesus. They have put their lives in danger for me. I am thankful for them. So are all the Gentile churches. Greet also the church that meets in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. Greet my dear friend Epenetus. He was the first person in Asia Minor to become a believer in Christ. Greet Mary. She worked very hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews. They have been in prison with me. They are leaders among the apostles. They became believers in Christ before I did.



Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. Greet Urbanus. He works together with me in serving Christ. And greet my dear friend Stachys. Greet Apelles. He remained faithful to Christ even when he was tested. Greet those who live in the house of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet the believers who live in the house of Narcissus. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa. Those women work hard for the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis. She is another woman who has worked very hard for the Lord. Greet Rufus. He is a chosen believer in the Lord. And greet his mother. She has been like a mother to me too. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon and Hermes. Greet Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister. Greet Olympas and all of the Lord's people who are with them.

Celebrate the present – Hebrews 3:13a

But build one another up every day. Do it as long as there is still time.

Create the future – Jeremiah 29:11

I know the plans I have for you," announces the Lord. "I want you to enjoy success. I do not plan to harm you. I will give you hope for the years to come.

Yesterday, today and tomorrow – Hebrews 12:1-2a

A huge cloud of witnesses is all around us. So let us throw off everything that stands in our way. Let us throw off any sin that holds on to us so tightly. And let us keep on running the race marked out for us. Let us keep looking to Jesus. He is the one who started this journey of faith. And he is the one who completes the journey of faith.

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL READER'S VERSION®. © 1996, 1998 Biblica. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of Biblica.

Drama – jubilee party time

by Jess Poole

This skit can be done with three people, or many if you have them. It is in a party setting and TJ is always stuffing their face with food. Have fun, be over the top, have a laugh with it. The skit begins outside, with someone coming out of a building and meeting two others who may be walking past the building or just sitting outside it, enjoying the weather.

[Enigmatic Person (EP) comes bouncing out the door, fanning self]

EP: Oh my, that feels good. A bit of fresh air. Ahhhh ... Oh hello, you're here! Give me a sec to cool down and I'll take you in.

Casey: What? Take us where? Who are you?

EP: You're here for the party, aren't you? Oh, say you are. URC is 50 today! They'll be sad if you don't come and join the party.

Casey: Who's URC?

(TJ elbows Casey in the ribs)

TJ: Yep, we're here for the party!

EP: Excellent, follow me!

(EP beckons them to follow and takes them inside. Casey looks questioningly at TJ, who motions them forward, giving them a thumbs up)

(Inside are many people)

EP: Tadah! Food and drinks are there, toilets are over there, enjoy the party.

(Goes to leave. TJ runs to food table)

Casey: Wait! Um ... where ... um ... is there ... um ...

TJ: *(Returns, stuffing face with sausage rolls, and speaking with a full mouth)* Are you not going to introduce us to Your Sea?

Casey: Yes! Where's Your Sea?

EP: *(Brushing off sausage roll crumbs)* Your Sea? You mean, U-R-C? Do you not know URC?

Casey: *(Looks down)* Er ... no?

TJ: *(Elbows Casey in the ribs)* Well, y'know, it's been a while, can't quite mind his, I mean her, I mean their face, exactly. *(Stuffs more sausage rolls into their mouth)*

(EP looks back and forth between them, smiles and nods)

EP: Then let me introduce you. OK, where to begin ... hmmm ... maybe a couple of the ministers?

TJ: *(Stuffing crisps into mouth)* Eugh, so they can preach at us? No thanks.

EP: *(Brushing crisps off themselves, big bright smile and laughing)* OK, firstly, say it, don't spray it.

Casey: *(Laughing)* Yeah, say, it don't spray it!

(TJ stuffs more crisps in their mouth)

EP: You'll love them, I mean Constance is wonderful and Madge! Well, Madge is a riot! Then ...

Casey: *(Interrupts)* Wait! You have women ministers here?

(TJ wanders off to get more food)

EP: Yes of course we do, URC always has. Constance was the first female minister, she'd love to tell you all about it. Then there's ...

(TJ comes running back in with more food)

TJ: There's some weirdos over there, shouting and waving big sticks. I think they were trying to steal my food!

EP: *(Looks over in general direction and laughs)* The big sticks have signs on the top.

They're called placards. Those are the activists, they fight against the injustices in the world.

Casey: Ooh, I love that rainbow T-shirt, so bright and colourful.

TJ: Looks like they're fighting with the guy in flares at the moment.

(They all look over)

EP: Ah, that's the 70's. They love the activists. They're always trying to paint the 'Ban the Bomb' signs on them. One time, 1972 was chasing Charlie *(starts laughing at the memory and continues to laugh whilst telling the story)*; he was trying to put flowers in Charlie's hair. Anyway, '72 had these massive bell bottom flares on and huge platform boots. He got his boots caught in the flares and went sprawling over the floor. He wasn't hurt but it was funny, seeing him laying there, surrounded by flowers, boots stuck in the bottom of his trousers. It took Charlie and two others to untangle '72.

(TJ squeals and starts hopping around)

EP: Oh sorry about that, that's Jane. She's not careful about where she puts her zimmer, especially when she's in a rush.

Casey: Where's she rushing to?

EP: The piano. She loves playing it. See that lot rushing up to the piano? *(Laughs)* They're the Methodists. They do love their singing ...*(sighs)* rejoice and sing.

TJ *(Mouth full of food)* Why ... *(EP and Casey step back until TJ swallows)* ... Why are they here?

EP: They work with URC, just as many others do. Umah, see you've got Jim from the Baptists chatting to Ally from the Church of Scotland, and Owain from Church in Wales is ...is I think he's dancing ... moonwalking maybe? He's having fun is what he's doing.

TJ: *(Points)* What's that about? Why is that group so angry? What are they furious about?
(All look over into corner. EP starts to laugh)

EP: They're not angry. That's FURY, Fellowship of the United Reformed Youth. They are lovely young people, well worth having a chat with, them and their later selves, URC Youth. If you look over there, see where the sail is? That's the Pilots, they're making a boat out of recycled plastic bottles.

TJ: A boat out of plastic bottles? Won't it sink if they stand on it?

EP: That's what they're going to find out! They love fun and adventure. They were supposed to be making a life-sized statue of Jesus out of party rings but the children ate them all!
(Laughs)

Casey: Wait ... there's kids here as well? Is this party not just for grown-ups?

EP: *(Laughing)* Heavens no! Everyone, and I mean everyone is welcome here.

Casey: Everyone's welcome?

EP: Everyone.

TJ: That's so cool.

EP: Right, off you go and mingle. There's a couple more people coming that I need to bring to the party.

Casey: Wait! You haven't introduced us to URC. You haven't told us who you are. How is it you know everyone here?

EP: *(smiling)* Haven't you worked it out? The URC is not a person, it is everyone here. All of these people are the URC. I know all of them because I introduced them to one another.

TJ: That's a lot of people! How do you know them all? Who are you?

EP: Is it not obvious? I, my dears, am Faith. *(Makes a dramatic exit)*

TJ and Casey: Woah!

(TJ and Casey stand gobsmacked for a moment and then shakes themselves)

Casey: I'm off to chat with Constance. I want to learn more. *(Walks away)*

TJ: I think I'm off to see that boat ... right after I get more food.

Challenge							
	If you have loaned something to somebody, let them keep it, and if you have borrowed anything, remember to return it. Write to your MP encouraging them to campaign to cancel the debts of poorer countries. Find out where your food comes from and try to buy local for a week. Pray for a fresh start while you tidy your room.	Thank some of the people who have helped you on your faith journey, maybe send a card or letter. Research a more recent hero of faith—maybe someone opposing slavery, working with the poor, speaking out about injustice. Encourage or help someone on their faith journey. Donate some food to the local food bank.	Slip a secret message into someone's school or work bag or pocket to encourage them. If you see someone who is homeless, smile and say hello. Find a café that does 'suspended coffee' and buy a drink for someone who may need it. Create an encouraging meme and post it on Instagram.	Read a story to someone younger than you or listen to them read one to you. Buy a charity gift for someone—your money will bring hope to others. Find a recipe for Friendship Cake, make it and pass it on. Spend some quiet time with God—maybe somewhere outside —and share your hopes and dreams with God.	When you see someone out jogging or running for exercise, cheer them on enthusiastically Try to build a regular time into your day to share in a prayer activity or read your Bible together Watch the old movie Chariots of Fire and think about what it teaches you about faith. Make some foot rub as a gift for someone who is on their feet all day.	Find out more about the work of Amnesty International and prisons charities such as PACT. Make a wellbeing pack for a new mum and deliver it to the neonatal ward of your local hospital. Find out about support for refugees in your local area and write to your council to thank them for what they do and encourage them to do more. Befriend someone who seems lonely.	It's party time—write a joyful song of praise—you could make some instruments to play along. Find fifty things that you no longer need and find a new use for them—recycle, give to charity shop, upcycle, gift. Do fifty random acts of kindness for family, friends and strangers. Go for a long walk or ride and spot fifty things to be grateful for.
Bible Reading	Leviticus 25: 8-12	Romans 16: 3-15	Hebrews 3:13a	Jeremiah 29:11	Hebrews 12: 1-2a	Hebrews 13:1-3	Psalms 118:24
Date							
How did it go?							

URC faith, hope and love since 1972

To mark the URC's 50th anniversary a wide range of resources are available here:
<https://urc.org.uk/who-we-are/our-50th-anniversary/>

These include service outlines, drama script and discussion, church quiz, bunting template, merchandise and all sorts of things to help your church mark this moment in the life of the URC.

Children's and Youth Work have created an intergenerational picture book Celebrate Together for churches to give away to enable everyone to be part of the celebrations. It tells the story of holding a party – there are things to find, questions to engage, short Bible passages and brief information about the URC. It is designed to be enjoyed by all ages and stages - full of lively illustrations and flaps to lift.

It is ideal for grandparents to read with their grandchildren, for toddler group and Messy Church families to take away. Why not share with groups that use your building, families accessing your café or food bank? We have 50,000 copies to give away! Order free copies through the URC bookshop (just pay postage and packing).

There is an intergenerational service outline to accompany the book, a PowerPoint presentation of the story, and a set of prayer station resources to enable you to link worship with the book. The introduction to the URC material is also available separately.





Let me tell you
of a great celebration
— every fifty years
a JUBILEE!

Let's join in
the jubilation:
shouts of joy and
trumpet blast.



Debts are forgiven,
homes are returned,
prisoners and slaves
are set free.

The land and the
people can rest for
God's justice
and mercy
will last.

URC faith, hope and love since 1972

Please help us bring as many URC experiences as possible to our 50th Anniversary Service at Methodist Central Hall, London, on Saturday 1 October 2022.

We know not all of us will not be able to come to the service in person. But that need not prevent all of our experiences being represented and honoured; a great cloud of URC witnesses! Here's how.

We invite everyone across the URC to send in a postcard, which we'll use in photos on the screen as the service unfolds. The postcards themselves will also be displayed in the worship space itself. We invite you to get a blank postcard and, on one side write whatever you feel comfortable to share – your name, age and location (including which URC you are connected to). On the other side of your postcard, as imaginatively and brightly as possible, share your thanksgiving to God for an aspect of the URC that you want to celebrate. You could draw pictures, write something, quote a suitable Bible passage, etc. Why not invite others connected to your congregation and/or enjoying your building to do the same?

Please send completed cards to Sam Richards, Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT by Monday 1 August 2022. Thank you very much in advance for helping to bring the breadth of the URC into the service that celebrates our life thus far together.

50: Worship Resources Competition



To celebrate the United Reformed Church's 50th anniversary, songwriters, composers, rappers, poets, choirs and bands are invited to submit an entry into the URC at 50: Worship Resources Competition.

There are four categories in which you can enter:

- Traditional hymn/song
- Poem
- Contemporary hymn/song
- Rap.

Full details will be available on the URC website soon.

Judges will select a winner from each category. Winning entries will be performed at General Assembly 2022 and included in a digital version of the URC at 50 celebration resource pack for local churches. Closing date for entries: 8 April 2022.

United Reformed Church Guide and Scout Fellowship

To celebrate an achievement in Scouting and Guiding we sometimes use the Italian word “Bravo”, which means “Well done”.

It can be shouted in a spelled-out manner, “B-R-A-V-O, Bravo!” or the young people can stand in a circle with a leader in the middle and as the leader turns pointing out with a finger, like a minute hand around a clock, the group join in saying the word, in increasing volume, “BRRRRRAVO!”

Bravo

Bringer of light
Ruler above
All of us praise you
Voices, hands, and hearts are lifted
Over the earth may your joy be known
Amen

Here is an acrostic prayer based on the word BRAVO. Perhaps some of your group could write their own.

Activities

Paper chain thanksgiving

Paper chains are an easily made decoration which can use up sheets of paper heading for the recycling. Starting with an A4 piece of paper, cut strips about 2cm across the width. On each strip, write something you are thankful for. Perhaps it might be for friends, the group you are in, an opportunity you have had, or something else. Form the first loop with a strip of paper, using glue to hold both ends together. With the second and subsequent loops, remember to thread through another loop before sticking, to form a chain that can be hung on notice boards, or across the walls.

Paper chain – a variation

The biblical jubilee year reminds us of restoration – perhaps before the group make their chain of thanksgiving and prayer, a pre-made chain of sorrows and pain could be shown. Jubilee breaks these chains that hold us back – tear these links, turn them over, write something new and positive before sticking the link back together.

Harvest potatoes

In the springtime, have a leader plant a seed potato in a bucket/tub/ potato bag at home and tend it through the summer. In the autumn, take the bucket to the group and explain that we can’t see what is happening in the soil, and we can’t see what happens in others’ lives but God sees our fruitfulness, and loves us knowing what is hidden to others. Tip out the bucket onto a tarpaulin. Is it just soil? Celebrate God’s goodness to us perhaps by cooking the potatoes, wrapped in foil, on a fire.



Jubilee theme-based film list

Films are a great way to bring people together to explore different issues. Below you'll find a series of films for a variety of age groups that explore a number of different issues relating to jubilee.

Once you have watched the film together, feel free to use the questions below to get the conversation going or create your own questions:

- I wonder what you think is the most important part of the film?
- I wonder where you are in the story or what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder where God is in the story?

The Lorax (U)

An adaptation of Dr Seuss' classic tale of a forest creature who shares the enduring power of hope. The animated adventure follows the journey of a boy as he searches for the one thing that will enable him to win the affection of the girl of his dreams. To find it, he must discover the story of the Lorax, the grumpy yet charming creature who fights to protect his world. This film explores issues about the environment.

Peter Rabbit 2 (U)

Thomas McGregor and Bea are now married and living with Peter and his rabbit family. Bored of life in the garden, Peter goes to the big city, where he meets shady characters and ends up creating chaos for the whole family. This film explores issues of family, land ownership and capitalism.

Sorry We Missed You (15)

Hoping that self-employment through gig economy can solve their financial woes, a hard-up UK delivery driver and his wife, struggling to raise a family, end up trapped in the vicious circle of this modern-day form of labour exploitation. The film explores issues of capitalism and the gig economy.

Get Out (15)

A young African American visits his white girlfriend's parents for the weekend, where his simmering uneasiness about their reception of him eventually reaches boiling point. This film explores issues of racism.

His House (15)

A refugee couple makes a harrowing escape from war-torn South Sudan, but then they struggle to adjust to their new life in an English town that has an evil lurking beneath the surface. This film explores issues of racism and immigration.

Dawn of the Dead 1978 (18)

Following an ever-growing epidemic of zombies that have risen from the dead, two Philadelphia S.W.A.T. team members, a traffic reporter, and his television executive girlfriend, seek refuge in a secluded shopping mall. This film explores issues of capitalism.

Faith

is

beginning

Sure

of

What

We

H O P E

For,...

of

What

WE

do

not

See

Hebrews 11:1

Intergenerational – recording the story of your church

Whether your church is 20 years old or 200 years old, it has a story to tell. Below is some guidance on how you could work with the children or young people in your church to become story catchers and record the history of your church.

The ways in which you record the history are as varied as the members in your congregation and so feel free to be as creative as you want. We've included a range of different methods that could be done on their own or combined.

Photo display

Ask the congregation if they have pictures of different events and dates in the church that are significant to them. Your minister or church secretary / elder will also be able to help with this. If you can, try to also get the specific dates and any thoughts or memories from people who were there.

You can then display the photos in the church on a board or scan them digitally and create a PowerPoint or video presentation.

Scrapbooks

Scrapbooks are a great way of creatively displaying information. It does require a few more supplies (craft paper, stickers, glue, scissors etc, as well as the scrapbooks). In addition to pictures, many scrapbooks include written narratives. Ask some of your older congregants to write their own experiences and thoughts about important dates

in your church history,

or look for important

documents that can be copied and included in the scrapbook.



There are some great introductory videos on YouTube which show you how to get started with your scrapbook; or look up scrapbooking on Pinterest to get more inspiration.

These could then be placed at the entrance to the church for members and visitors to look through.

Interviews

A great way of gathering the story of your church is to interview members of the congregation and other people who have been associated with the church over the years. You could take notes whilst they are speaking or, with their permission, you could record the video and audio of their interview.

A simple and cheap way to record an interview would be to use a smartphone on a tripod. As long as the subject is close to you and you are not in a busy environment, the sound should be adequate. You could choose to invest in a lapel mic which can then be plugged directly into a smartphone for better audio. Once you're set up, you can begin to ask the questions. We've included a few below to get you started but feel free to come up with your own.

- How long have you been part of this church community and when did you join?
- What are the most significant memories for you of your time at the church?
- How has the church helped your faith?
- What do you feel is the legacy of the church?

Once you have recorded the interviews, you can edit them into a video which can be shown at a service or uploaded on to the church website or on YouTube. There is a lot of free editing software which can help you do this.

Commemorative display

A great way of celebrating the current community of the church is to create a display. An example of this would be to get everyone associated with the church to draw around their hand on a piece of card and cut it out. If this is too much hassle, you could just give everyone a piece of card that has already been cut out in the shape of a hand.

Next, get each person to decorate it how they would like but make sure they write their name on to the card as well.

Once you have collected all the hands in, display them together in a shape. For example, Penwortham URC put their hands together into the shape of the cross which is now displayed in the main entrance of the church (see picture).



Home

Aim: This session explores the concept of 'home', reasons why people experience homelessness, and how Christians and others can respond.

Breaking ground (five minutes)

Draw a large outline of a home – you can be as creative as you like with the kind of home, but just a quick outline is fine. Take a minute to fill it with words or pictures of the things you think are important about a home. Share your ideas with others to find out where you agree and to discover things you hadn't thought of.

Laying the foundation (ten minutes)

Many of us have a place we call "home" – in all different shapes and sizes. Some of us spend our time between two or more places where we live. How do you organise all your belongings?

What do you think it's like for someone who doesn't have a home? You might have personal experience. The Joint Public Issues Team has produced some videos and written articles that feature people telling their stories of homelessness: jointpublicissues.org.uk/endhomelessness

Read Matthew 8:19-20. Do these words surprise you? Does it change how you think about homelessness?

Brick by brick (15 minutes)

Create a wall of sticky notes with your answers to these questions:

1. Jubilee was a time for the people of God to rest, reset and celebrate. In Leviticus 25:1-13 we read about sabbath years and jubilee years. What were these?
2. What does Leviticus 25:23 say about who owns the land? How does this make a difference to things?
3. If you had land in that society, you could grow food and provide for your family. Why do you think people had to leave or sell their land in the first place?
4. Imagine that this year was declared a jubilee year here in our country. What kinds of things do you think might happen?

Raising the roof (15 minutes)

Worship and prayer about “home”.

Sketch out a jubilee scene – who will be there and what will they be doing?

Songs

- “God of Justice” by Tim Hughes
- “All are welcome” (“Let us build a house”) by Marty Haugen
- “When I needed a neighbour” by Sydney Carter
- “Cross over the road, my friend” by Pamela Verrall.

Think about this image: www.flickr.com/photos/itmpa/47037695761



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Money talks

Aim: This session examines debt as experienced in today's world, contrasting it with how debt is treated in the Bible, and exploring how we can help those who experience debt now.

The accumulation game (ten minutes)

What to do:

1. Everyone in the group gets two tokens each – these could be lollipop sticks, beads, coins, etc.
2. Travel around the room randomly until a pre-arranged signal – eg a clap, a ringing bell.
3. Turn to the nearest person and play one round of Rock, Paper, Scissors with them. The winner receives one token from the loser.
4. If a player runs out of tokens, they are out of the game.
5. Continue from Step 2.
6. Stop the game after four or five rounds and let each player count up how many tokens they have.

To think about:

Who is the “winner” of the game? Often, we will say the one with the most tokens. Does everyone feel that they deserved the number of tokens they ended up with? It might have been quite boring for those who lost their tokens quickly. What if the point of the game was for as many people to keep playing as long as possible? How might the rules of the game be changed to facilitate a longer, more enjoyable time for everyone?

Ready money (ten minutes)

Financial matters are important for most people. In the UK in these days, we need money to survive, and we get income by “selling” goods, services, our time, skills and effort in

different ways. But not everyone gets paid the same. Why do you think a professional footballer gets paid a different amount from a groundskeeper? Why do you think a female footballer gets paid a different amount from a male footballer?

Safeguards like the National Minimum Wage, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments and Universal Credit are in place to try to make sure that everyone in Britain has enough money – for food, housing and to provide for any children or adults that depend on them. Why do you think people need these sorts of safeguards?

With these safeguards in place, why do you think people still borrow money? You can hear real stories of people who have recently struggled with debt here: resetthedebt.uk/stories
Do you think debts should always be repaid? If faced with the choice, is it more important to repay a debt or to feed your children?

Forgive us our debts (15 minutes)

1. Read Deuteronomy 15:1-4.
2. The society of the time was largely agrarian – farming your family land for your own food and materials and for trading with others. Can you think of reasons why people might have got into debt in those days?
3. Debt creates “power relationships”. What do you think that feels like for creditors (people who lend) and debtors (people who borrow)?
4. How would things change for the creditor and the debtor if debt was cancelled every seventh year?
5. Roleplay in twos: Imagine that a debt cancellation year is coming soon but times are hard. One person asks the other for help as they have no way of feeding their family. How would that conversation go?
6. How could cancelling debts be a good thing for both the debtor and the creditor?
7. Debt can be useful: our banking system allows people to borrow money (go into debt) to buy homes and other goods and to start businesses. Would a jubilee debt cancellation system work in our society? Who would benefit the most from jubilee, and who would lose out? Could we grant debt cancellation to some and not others?

As we forgive our debtors (five minutes)

Quick-fire thinking around debt in the New Testament. Choose one of these two options:

Jesus explains that forgiveness is something Christians should do by telling a parable about debt forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35). How often do you think we should forgive people who are in debt to us?

The Lord’s prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4) includes the words “Forgive us our debts”. What other words do you sometimes hear people pray there? Is debt a sin? What should our response be to someone sinning against us?

Where your treasure is (ten minutes)

Suggestions for worship activities about jubilee debt:

1. Read Proverbs 19:17 or 2 Corinthians 8:9. How could you represent this verse using only images or modelling clay?
2. Scroll through the images at bit.ly/hungryjesus for inspiration. Plan where you could leave some artwork to point others to the needs of those in debt.
3. Write a short letter or design a comic strip that explains how someone in debt might have been changed by debt cancellation.

Songs

- “Here I am to worship” by Tim Hughes
- “Beauty for brokenness” by Graham Kendrick
- “Christ be our light” by Bernadette Farrell
- “Abundant life” by Ruth Duck and Marty Haugen.

Prayers

Try the Lord’s Prayer in Makaton (youtu.be/_a7mYX_9UIU) or British Sign Language (youtu.be/etTMuzLbaQ8) or another language – especially “forgive us our debts/sins/trespasses”.

You could use these words as part of your prayers:

God of abundant life,
thank you for all the blessings we have:
friends and family, food and fun,
and all the things we often don’t even notice.
Like Jesus, help me to bring good news to the poor,
and to offer love and hope when life is difficult.
In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Treasure in heaven (immediate and long-term action)

Organise a sponsored event to raise awareness of, and contribute to funds for, Christian charities supporting those in debt e.g. Church Action on Poverty and Christians Against Poverty. You could invite a representative to a church service to share about their work.

Notice the difficulties faced by local individuals and families experiencing poverty and perhaps spiralling debt. In what ways could you and your congregation or group support them, treating them with dignity and love?

Visit the Jubilee Debt Campaign (JDC) website: jubileedebt.org.uk. Find out about the hardship still faced by people because of their geography or background. How would Jubilee affect their lives? What actions does JDC suggest you can take to help make a difference?

Online resources

- Games for financial literacy: opploans.com/oppu/articles/games-financial-literacy/
- Reset the Debt report: www.resetthedebt.uk/report
- Reset the Debt Bible study from Nehemiah: www.resetthedebt.uk/resources (group exploration session)
- Reset the Debt theology around jubilee: www.resetthedebt.uk/theology/
- Jubilee Debt Campaign (international debt): jubileedebt.org.uk/the-debt-crisis

Taskmaster games night

Introduction

This activity is based on the TV show '*Taskmaster*'. Participants attempt challenges and points are awarded by the leader. The points system can be as fair or unfair as you like but, by making it unfair, you can then lead into discussing the parable of the workers in the vineyard in Matthew 20:1-16. It suggests that the love of God can seem unfair as it is open to everyone, even those we may not like.

Challenges

Balloon challenge

Blow up the biggest balloon in a minute, whilst blindfolded.

Teabag challenge

Throw a teabag into a mug from the furthest distance.

Egg challenge

Get an egg as high as possible without breaking it.

Secret challenge

Score as many points as you can. (Don't tell the participants the secret or hint of how to gain points.) For example, the word "What" is how they score points. Points can be taken away for aggressive behaviour.

Tallest tower challenge

Construct the tallest tower using only spaghetti pasta and marshmallows.

Sticky note challenge

Cover your body with as many sticky notes as possible whilst blindfolded.

Wrapping up

Add up the scores at the end and announce the winner.

End the session by asking those involved how they felt about the scoring system. Read the parable together and reflect on how the workers felt. Did the participants express similar feelings? Does this affect what we think about God's message of the Kingdom and who is invited?

Young people's Bible study

The URC is celebrating its Golden Jubilee (or 50th birthday) this year. But marking 50 years with a jubilee year is an idea from the Old Testament. This is an introduction to help you think about what a jubilee year meant in the Old Testament and to think about what it might mean for us today.

Bible reading: Leviticus 25

Listening to God through the Bible

This is a simple way of reading the Bible prayerfully as a group:

1. When we read or listen to the Bible, we pray the God's Holy Spirit will speak to us through it. We might hear God speaking, we might hear a particular word or phrase that stands out for us, or we might be struck by what someone else thinks is important. God can speak to us in all these ways.
2. The first time you hear this reading try just listening to it. You might close your eyes, sit comfortably and ask God to speak to you.
3. Don't worry if you get distracted and other thoughts come into your head. When you notice this happening, just bring your attention back to the reading. Don't worry if you have missed something.
4. After hearing the reading, think: Were there any words or phrases that stood out for me? How did this reading make me feel? (Bored? Confused? Curious? Excited?).
5. I wonder what you think is important in this reading? If you are in a group, you might like to say out loud the word or phrase that caught your attention (but you don't have to).
6. Listen to the reading again.
7. After hearing the reading: did anything stand out for you this time? Listen to what other people might have heard in the reading.
8. You might like to pray about what you heard in the reading. Ask God to speak to you again during the coming week if there is something you need to hear.
9. You might like to go back and look at the reading again during the week. Read it for yourself instead of listening to it. What stands out for you this time?



Imagine

Before listening to the reading, close your eyes and listen to these words:

Imagine your family owned a piece of land. It is land that your family has farmed for years. There is a house where you, your brothers and sisters and your parents live.

The land was given to your grandparents by

God when they moved to this place with the rest of your tribe. Everyone got a piece of land to farm and live on, according to the size of their family.

After some very difficult years farming the land, with bad weather and illness meaning your father couldn't grow as much as usual, he had to sell the land and house just to have enough money to look after your family. The following years your father rented some land and a house from someone else in order to keep farming and give you food.

It's nearly 50 years since your grandparents originally started farming their land, the land you don't have any more. What might the future hold for you?

Now listen to the reading again.

What is important?

Having listened to the reading a few times, I wonder what you think are the important things in it?

One good way of working this out is to draw a cartoon of the reading. You have to limit yourself to four panels (squares) to draw in. I wonder what you might draw to get across the important parts of this reading?

Have a go at this on your own and then have a look at what other people have drawn. What things did you agree with others that needed to be in the cartoon? What things did you decide to leave out?

Thinking about the reading (Part 1)

The idea of a jubilee year fits into God's pattern for his people that included the idea of a Sabbath day each week (for the Jews it was Saturday; for Christians, it became Sunday) when God said that everyone should not work. The Sabbath day was a time to remember God. God also told the Jews to have a Sabbath year when they were farming their land. This meant



planting crops for six years and then not planting anything for the seventh year (the Sabbath year). This gave the land time to rest and reminded people how they relied on God. God provided enough crops in the sixth year to keep the people going during the seventh.

I wonder what you think of these rules that God gave to the people? I wonder if they were demands by God for people to obey him, or if they were things God wanted the people to do because it would be good for them – and for the land?

When the tribes of Israel escaped from Egypt and eventually moved into a new land, it was divided up between them all. Land was very important and very valuable as it was the main way people could grow food to live. As time went on, though, some people would have to sell their land for all sorts of reasons (perhaps they couldn't grow enough to live on and needed some money, perhaps someone died and they couldn't farm the land any more). Sometimes people even had to sell themselves as slaves to someone else because they couldn't afford to survive alone. In this reading, God says that after seven lots of seven years (49 years), any land that people had sold to someone else should be returned to them or their family. Also, anyone who been sold as a slave should be set free.

The year of jubilee meant that, every 50 years, property (the most important element of wealth) would be given back to those who originally owned it. This stopped some people from owning more and more and meant that others who had struggled to live had a boost for their family. The jubilee year was also a reminder to everyone that the land they owned actually belonged to God and it was, in effect, being loaned to them. I wonder how you feel about this? I wonder what you think about having to give back some land or property you had bought to its original owner? I wonder what you think about getting back some land you had sold to someone else?

Listen to the reading again

Now you've heard the reading a few times. Try to listen to the reading again remembering the things you have been thinking about.

Thinking about the reading (Part 2)

What do you know about buying or renting land or property in our country today? What do you have to do? Is it expensive? Or complicated? Can anyone do it? If you had a choice, would you prefer to rent or to own some property? What might be the advantages of owning or of renting property?

In our country today, it is much easier to buy some property (land or a house) if you already own some. Banks are more willing to lend you the money to buy more if you already have something.

In our country, when you buy property it is yours to keep forever and then to give to whoever you want to when you die. In this way, people who have a lot of property usually end up keeping it in their family. And people who don't have any can find it hard to buy some.

Having thought about owning property (land or a house) in our country today, I wonder what you think about God's rule for a jubilee year? What might be the advantages or disadvantages of this law?

I wonder what you think about the way that people keep property and wealth in our country? What might be the advantages of this? What might be the disadvantages?

Activity

Imagine you and your friends have survived a zombie apocalypse. You've just found somewhere safe to live that is protected from zombie attacks. You each have a bit of land to farm and a small house to live in. What rules would you agree on to try to keep your community together?

Jesus said the most important rule was to love God and to love your neighbour (Mark 12: 30-31). I wonder how you might put this into practice in a set of rules for your community? Would you have any rules about property?

If you were going to do something important in your community every 50 years, I wonder what you would want to do? Would this help your community in some way?



Jubilee today

This reading from the Old Testament gives us a glimpse of how God wanted society to work. Is it relevant at all to our country today? It is hard to imagine anyone in our country selling themselves or one of their family to be a slave in order to escape poverty and stay alive. What sort of things do you think people might do if they are struggling to survive in our country?



As we celebrate the 50th year that the URC has existed, I wonder if there is anything important for the URC to do this year? Perhaps something that helps people who have lost what they have? Perhaps something to remind people that what we have comes from God? Perhaps something to help us not become over-attached to the things that we own? Perhaps something to make sure wealth and property doesn't keep building up in the hands of a few people?

I wonder what you might like the URC to do to mark this 50th year. Is there something that you or your church could do to mark the URC's jubilee year in a similar way to Israel's jubilee year?

You can explore these ideas in more depth in other sections of this resource.



URC Youth Plus: modern day slavery

What is your favourite possession? How much monetary value would you place on it?

Price Is Right

Can you encourage friends and family to consider shopping ethically? Possibly invite them to a fun-filled evening where they bring along the clothes they don't wear, or don't fit any more. You may exchange garments or charge a small fee to come along, or per item that they choose, with proceeds going to a charity working towards eradicating modern day slavery. You may consider hosting a similar event for your youth group.

Modern slavery is where one person controls another by exploiting a vulnerability. It is often linked with human trafficking, where a person is forced into a service against their will – usually forced work or prostitution. The control can be physical, financial, or psychological. (Hope for Justice www.hopeforjustice.org)

Modern slavery is the severe exploitation of other people for personal or commercial gain. Modern slavery is all around us, but often just out of sight. (Anti-Slavery www.antislavery.org)

What examples of modern day slavery can you think of?

Think of your favourite person. What makes them special to you? What monetary value would you place on them?

Read

Read these articles on modern day slavery:

Construction News (online) 2019

<https://www.constructionnews.co.uk/legal/13-arrested-in-uk-and-romania>

Thirteen men have been arrested on suspicion of modern slavery offences relating to building sites in north London. The Metropolitan Police said that 54 men and one male aged under 18 had been safeguarded following a joint operation with Romanian police. They were targeting what they believed to be an organised crime group trafficking Romanians to the Kingsbury area of north London to work on building sites as unskilled labourers. Suspects in both countries were targeted in an operation on Tuesday morning, including in Harrow and Brent.



Men were found housed in homes with mattresses covering the entire floor space, sleeping in extremely cramped conditions. They are now receiving support from specialist officers. Cash and a firearm were also seized.

Eight men have been arrested in London for human trafficking, and a further five were arrested in Romania where gold and around €250,000 (£216,000) in cash were seized. A statement from the Metropolitan Police said that those arrested were aged between 22 and 49 years old. They have been arrested for a variety of offences, including causing another person to complete forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking contrary to the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Detective Constable Dec Wilson said: "These arrests in the UK and abroad are the result of working closely with our partners in Romania for the past 18 months, to identify those involved in human trafficking and labour exploitation." He said police would target those committing modern slavery offences and appealed for the public to report any suspicions they have about the crimes. "Those affected do not often see themselves as potential victims of labour exploitation and many will have been coerced into this life to make money for an organised crime network. We believe there are victims of modern slavery in every borough across London and the public may encounter them every day, possibly without realising. Victims are often told the police and authorities in the UK are not to be trusted and, with limited English, the victims are unable to seek help, even if they want to," he said.

Evening Standard 2020.

www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/modern-slavery-mother-trafficked-uk-escape-a4572118.html

A mother who was trafficked into the UK after being "imprisoned" by her employers today told of her escape from modern slavery. Leslie, 32, said she worked "what felt like 24 hours a day," with "little to no pay" and received "leftovers" for dinner when she was employed by a family in Dubai as a domestic worker.

She had left her home country of the Philippines with a plan to send back money to support three children. She said: "Cameras were everywhere watching me and all the doors and windows would be locked. There was just no escape."

After a year she was taken to the UK with her employers, who held her passport. "In the morning, I tried to escape but I couldn't open the door as it was locked," she said. "But in the afternoon, they asked me to take out the bins and I didn't know how to open the door, so I asked them to show me. "The next day I woke up early and remembered what they taught me, unlocked the door and ran."

Leslie slept in a park for almost a week, begging people for help. She received help from a fellow Filipino who took her in for several months before she moved to a safe house for people who have been trafficked. Her case worker then referred her to Beam, an organisation raising money to pay for job training for disadvantaged people, and she is now retraining as a beautician. She is too frightened to report those who held her captive.

- What has surprised you about these accounts?
- Investigate ways you might raise awareness in your church.
- What action will you take?

Challenge

Join the Hope Challenge 200 Community and raise £200 for Hope for Justice.
www.hopeforjustice.org/hope-challenge-200/#modal

Videos

Here is a selection of short video clips. Please choose one you feel is appropriate for the group you are working with. What emotions do you feel after watching the clip? Explore how this clip made you feel about the injured party and the perpetrators.

- **<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYGe2hL8Hgo>**
The signs of hidden harm are all around us, yet they can easily be missed.
Thames Valley Police
- **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jv1H_fAoOG4**
Modern slavery is closer than you think. This film includes information on how to spot potential victims, how they may be exploited and what you can do to help free the UK from modern slavery. *Home Office*
- **<https://youtu.be/IS6nn88b4mo>**
A light in the dark – modern slavery is a serious crime. It encompasses slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. *The Salvation Army UK and Ireland Territory*
- **<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUGPiM0hlhc>**
Modern slavery is closer than we think. *Anti-Slavery International*

Can you ...

- Write to your MP asking them to encourage government to continue its commitment to tackling modern day slavery? You might attach a petition signed by members of your Church.
- Organise for a speaker from a charity working towards eradicating modern day slavery to speak at your church or youth group?



Did you know ...

General Assembly 2021 accepted West Midlands Synod resolutions for a denominational policy statement on modern day slavery. Its underlying principle is for our policies and procedures to reflect the URC's commitment to acting ethically in all areas. Read more about the URC standpoint on legacies of slavery and modern day slavery on: urc.org.uk/legacies-of-slavery

What do you think of the resolutions? What difference do you think they will make in your church? Are there additions you would make?

Additional materials and images

- *Human trafficking handbook: recognising trafficking and modern-day slavery in the UK* (Parosha Chandran: 2011)
- *Modern-day child slavery* (Hans van de Glind: 2008)
- *The small hands of slavery: modern day child slavery: a report by Save the Children UK* (Online report, Save the Children UK: 2007)
- www.salvationarmy.org.uk/modern-slavery/latest-campaigns/wearenotforsale
- www.hopeforjustice.org
- Modern slavery in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

Commitment prayer

Beyond the dark

I hear the cries of daughters and sons beyond the dark, trafficked and enslaved for the profit of others.

I stand with you.

I see the next generation of vulnerable children targeted for the benefit of worldly pleasures.

I will fight for you.

I stand with the frontline practitioners, advocating for the freedom of victims of oppression and walking alongside survivors.

I acknowledge you.

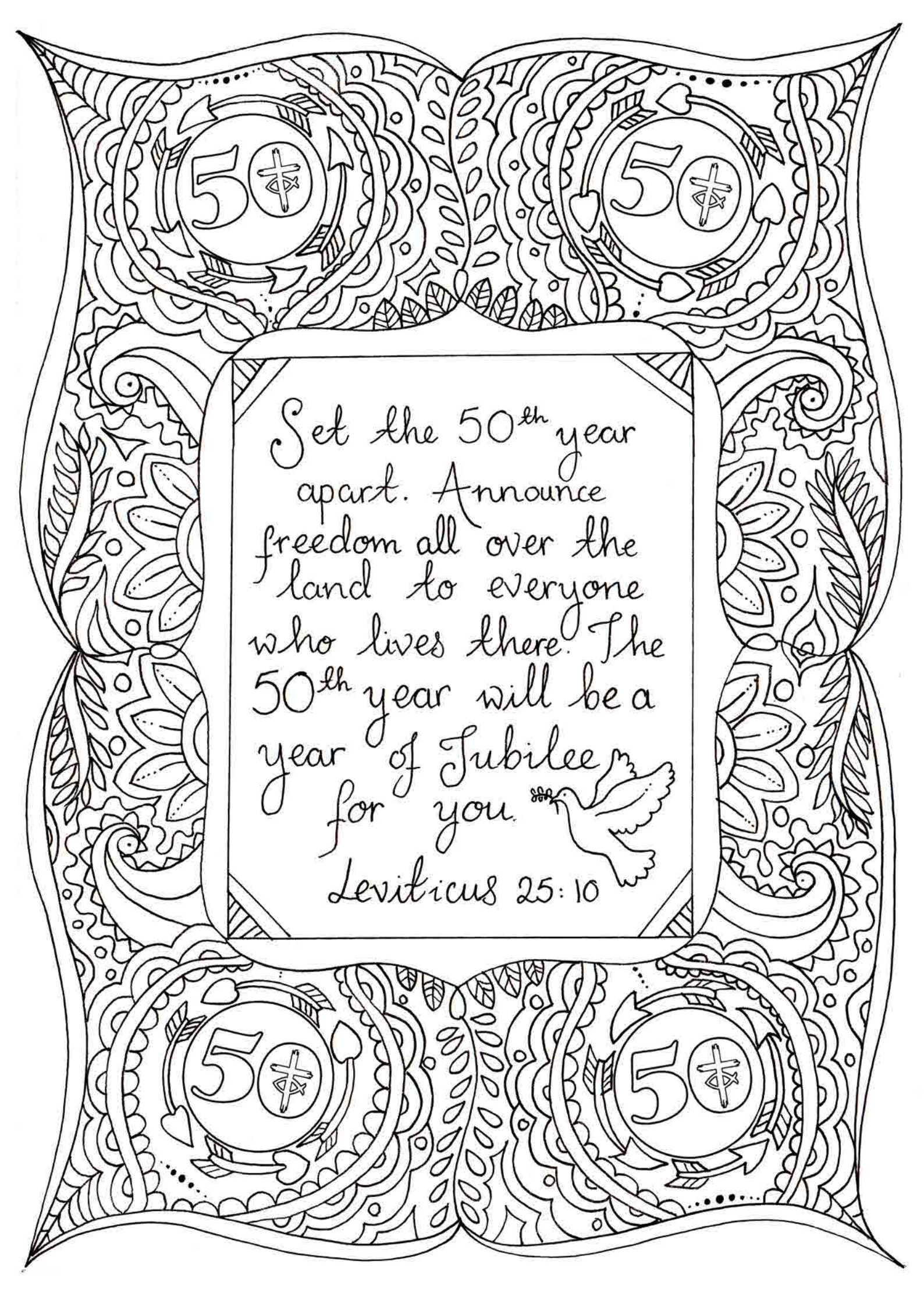
I lament for the ways I have knowingly and unknowingly contributed to modern slavery and human trafficking through my ignorance, my privilege and my spending power.

I refuse to be blind.

May my prayers and those of your people turn into action as we fight against injustice together.

We are not free until we all experience light.





Set the 50th year
apart. Announce
freedom all over the
land to everyone
who lives there. The
50th year will be a
year of Jubilee
for you.

Leviticus 25:10



Bible studies: Economic systems through the eyes of jubilee

See, judge, act: Bible study

We will engage in the fascinating topic of money, wealth, debt, interest, and jubilee by using the see, judge, act contextual Bible study method. The two topics include:

1. Empire economics and jubilee: why did the Hebrew practice of jubilee arise? (Leviticus: 25)
2. And forgive us our debts: Jesus and the debt based economic system (Luke 11:1-4 and Matthew 6:9-13)

You could use the outline and timing below for online/Zoom gatherings. In-person meetings would need longer times. Small groups may want to share all sessions together:

1. Welcome and prayer (five minutes)
2. Intro, notes and text (ten minutes)
3. Small groups/breakout rooms (three sessions, each lasting ten minutes)
4. Plenary after each session (five to ten minutes after each of the three small groups)
5. Final summary and prayer (five to ten minutes - total time approximately 1.5 hours)

Introduction

We don't often think about our economic systems. We are born into them. Like fish in water, we assume that money, debt, and interest payments are just a natural part of life. Jesus, however, spoke about debt, wealth, and money more than even prayer. Jesus encouraged the disciples to reject Empire's economics. And no wonder!

The previous 3,000 years had seen city-state colonisers accumulating unimaginable wealth from the margins of empire. Israel had been the victim of countless trawling expeditions, and in Jesus' time, Galilee was being eviscerated. Rome used the old debt system to net in all the wealth, and Jesus said: "No way, José." We might even think of Jesus' mission as subverting Empire by fishing people out of its death-dealing economics. Maybe it's time we unhooked ourselves from that age-old debt system ...

A postcolonial reading of the Bible makes a radical claim: that debt brings death, not life, and cannot be used for "good", no matter how much it tries to convince us it can, and no matter how much we ourselves want to defend this system into which we are born (this happens in groups and in ourselves). May these Bible texts help us to see through the opaque debt system to what it truly is, judge why Jesus wanted to break us free from it, and then act to subvert its power over us.

Empire economics and jubilee

Why did the Hebrew practice of jubilee arise?

Reading the text (Leviticus 25:8-13, 23-28, 39)

'See' group session

(Ten mins for group, followed by five-ten minute plenary to share wider).

- How is the term "jubilee" often used today? (Tube, Queen's anniversary etc)
- How does the meaning of jubilee in the text differ from its common uses today?
- Give examples of where you see debt relief needed today.

'Judge' group session

(10-15 minutes followed by plenary).

Notes:

Read Leviticus 25:23-28 again. How did the idea of jubilee arise? Debt amnesties or clean slates were a regular feature of ancient city-states. Jubilee was a powerful tool in the hands of Assyrian and Babylonian kings to control the power of the wealthy elite. These elites were constantly owed rents, fees, and interest on loans by poorer citizens. Left unchecked, the inevitable inequality created in communities could cause huge social and political upheaval. The king always needed access to taxes, labour, and men for armies. The elites threatened that order.

Every so often, kings declared a "Year of the Lord's Favour" when poor citizens' debts were cancelled. Some scholars suggest that jubilee was not so much an act of kindness as a mechanism to maintain the king's power. By clearing the slate (amarga) of personal debt, the king returned to men (yes, very patriarchal) their lands and wives and children who had become bond servants to service their debt. Jubilee enabled the king to keep land "owners" socially and economically active, maintain order, and prevent wide-spread insolvency. Another positive effect was that jubilee tended to create reasonably fair and equitable societies. If you're going to opt for a debt-based economic system, you'd better have regular jubilees or face the consequences! As we see in Leviticus 25, the returning Hebrews adopted jubilee for these very reasons.

- Who has power in this passage? Who has very little power?
- What happens to people who get enmeshed in the debt system, then and now?
- Who benefitted when debt relief was not practised? Who benefits today?

'Act' group session

(Around five-ten minutes, then gather for concluding thoughts).

Notes:

Why is jubilee needed in highly monetised societies? This question goes to the heart of how debt and money operate. Let's summarise as briefly as possible: debt is not real, like forests or people. Debt is simply an agreement, a promise to pay back your land, wealth, labour, or some other service at a future date, with interest. Money, by the way, is merely a symbolic representation of that debt. If you owe money or debt, you are "guilty" of that debt (think of economic terms like "guilts", "guilders", "redemption" etc.) Your debt carries interest that compounds itself. Interest is paid not only on the original sum, but also on the interest. Mathematically speaking, debt grows far quicker than any economic activity. The Babylonians (who were good at maths) understood this. They knew clean slates were critical to stabilise the economic system, because debt creates inequality, bondage, and hardship. It produces a pyramid of wealth in which people at the foot owe people at the head. Debt is designed to move wealth upwards. Left unchecked, debt was devastating and deadly. The only way for

ancient kings to stabilise the debt system was to write off the original debt regularly, or to “redeem the original sin”.

The Hebrews returning from Babylon codified jubilee in their Scriptures (assuming a post-Exilic reading). They made Yahweh the “Protector of the Poor” against a system that concentrated lands and wealth into the hands of elites. It all worked dandily for about 2000 years, but the influence of the elites steadily increased. By the Classical Period (Greeks and Romans), the power of kings had waned. Codified debt write-offs were all but lost, and no one was willing or able to cancel debt en masse.

- Do you think jubilee actually worked to bring equity in Bible times?
- What lessons from jubilee can we apply to our economics today?

And forgive our debts: Jesus and the debt monetary system

Read the introduction again and text (Luke 11:1-4 and Matthew 6:9-13 using various Bible versions).

‘See’ session

(about ten minutes in group, with five-ten minutes plenary afterwards).

Notes:

We learned that debt and money are not real, but a “promise to pay”. Debt is a powerful tool used by the owners of debt to shift wealth up. Debt orders society into a hierarchy of rich and poor. This pyramid empowers profiteers to “add field to field” and to force the poor into penury. Jubilee, we saw, was regularly declared by the kings of ancient empires to curtail the power of elites. However, by the first century, jubilee was all but lost. Galilee was at the margins of the latest empire, Rome. Rome’s debt economy was devastating the poor. Jesus’ mission was to “proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour”, or a new, permanent, jubilee. Think of God’s mission as one that overturns the debt-based economic tables of empire! We see this interpretation quite clearly in The Lord’s Prayer ...

- How important has the Lord’s Prayer been in your spiritual journey?
- Off the top of your head, think of other times when Jesus had to deal with money.
- How does this prayer change if we use “debt” rather than “sins” or “trespasses”?

‘Judge’ session

(15 minutes – this is a critical session, so give it time, then ten minute plenary).

Notes:

A big question for New Testament students centres on the real meaning of The Lord’s Prayer. Professor Doug Oakman (Jesus, Debt and The Lord’s Prayer, 2014) suggests that the original prayer could well have been: Abba, give us today our daily bread; forgive all our debt; as we forgive the debt owed to us; and deliver us from the evil monetary system.

- Why do you think Jesus links “daily bread” with forgiveness of debt?
- How often do we rely on money for our daily bread?
- Do you think there will be debt and money in the Kingdom of God?

‘Act’ session

(Ten minutes then concluding thoughts and end prayer).

- What would happen to our system if all debt were cancelled today? (chaos, kingdom?)
- Can you think of examples of economic systems not based on debt? (gift economies, indigenous communities – where often women were in charge of allocating resources to meet need)
- What practical steps can we take to challenge or subvert debt in the world today?



A prayer of confession

You have called us on a spiritual journey, Lord,
yet, too often, we see it as a sentimental journey.
We have found a comfortable place, and have settled;
we like where we are, and we like to think
that we know where we are going.
Forgive us our complacency; call us from our comfort zones,
and lead us onwards as strangers on earth once more,
so that we walk by faith, and put our hope in you alone.
Amen. *(from Roots for Churches)*

A prayer for all ages together

We are like Father Abraham, setting off with God.
(march on the spot)
We don't know where we're going, but down the road we plod.
We can't see very far ahead,
(shield your eyes with your hand, peer around)
but we are rarely filled with dread,
(shudder anxiously)
because we walk with hope in our heart,
(place hand on heart)
walking by faith, right from the start!
Amen. *(from Roots for Churches)*

How can we talk to our children and teens about injustice?
www.parentingforfaith.org/post/injustice

Prayer

Let us pray for those who hunger in this land:
whose only kitchen is a soup kitchen,
whose only food is what others don't want,
whose diet depends on luck, not on planning.

[pause]

Lord, feed your people
using our skills and conscience,
and eradicate from our politics and private lives
the apathy to hunger which comes from over-eating.
Let us pray for the hungry and the fed.
Lord, have mercy.
Let us pray for the hungry in other lands,
whose economies, burdened by debt,
cannot respond to human need:
or where fields are farmed for our benefit
by low-wage workers courted by starvation.

[pause]

Lord, feed your people—
even if rulers must cancel debt,
and shareholders lose profit,
or diners restrict their choice—
in order that all may be nourished.
Let us pray for the hungry and the fed.
Lord, have mercy.
Let us pray for those hungry for justice,
who document inequalities,
demonstrate against tyranny,
distinguish between need and greed,
And are sometimes misrepresented or persecuted in the process.

[pause]

May their labour not be in vain
and may we be counted in their number.
Let us pray for the hungry and the fed.
Lord, have mercy.
So, in the presence of the Bread of Life
who refused food for himself
in order to nourish others,
we deepen our devotion by praying his words:
Our Father in heaven ...

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Hymns and songs

- “For the healing of the nations by Fred Kaan: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dc-2tiAfSyY
- “God who sets us on a journey by Joy Dine (1937 – 2001) © Revd Mervyn Dine: www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/posts/god-who-sets-us-on-a-journey-website-only/
- “The church of Christ in every age” by F Pratt Green: www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGG9ht_wzK0&ab_channel=SouthCliffMethodistChurch
- “Beauty for brokenness” by Graham Kendrick: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MO1G-o7Yj-c&feature=youtu.be>
- “Do Something” by Matthew West: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_RjndG0IX8
- “Shout” by Chris Tomlin and Matt Redman: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCI8vWQbq3k>
- “God of Justice” by Tim Hughes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nnqOI4mVKc>
- “All through history” by Nick and Becky Drake: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lxs2l2hzv4>
- “Faith” by Nick and Becky Drake: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6rm17CQlZA>
- “God beside” by Fischy Music: <https://youtu.be/BffbXy-VfiU>
- “Celebrate” by Fischy Music – available on subscription: <https://www.fischy.com/fischy-music-online/songs/celebrate/>
- “On a Sunday morning” by Fischy Music – available on subscription: <https://www.fischy.com/fischy-music-online/songs/on-a-sunday-morning/>
- “Good to us” by Sameboat Music: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfnDNm_ltR8
- “This is amazing grace” by Bethel Music Kids: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxVadCcRfol>
- “Jubilee” by Shout Praise Kids: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=neOLP9I-uHs>
- “These are the days of Elijah” by Robin Mark: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca9LnzJnpjQ>

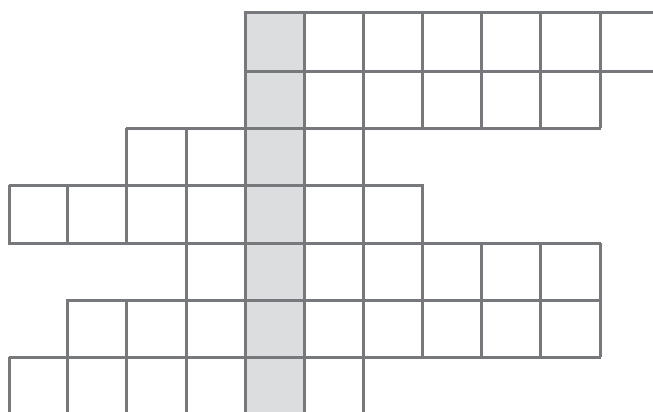
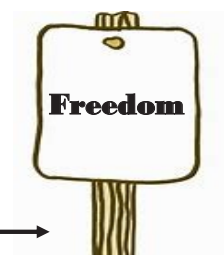
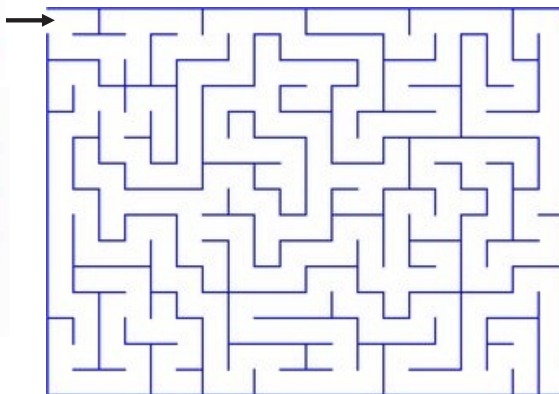


Puzzle pages

What am I? Can you identify these different items from a celebration?



Help bring the people from injustice to freedom.



4 letters

When someone owes other people money or a country owes another country money.

6 letters

What anniversary is the URC celebrating?

What does the U in URC stand for?

7 letters

This word means fair treatment for all, equal rights, impartial treatment, what is right.

The part of the church which reaches out to others.

When people are treated like possessions by others

8 letters

What we do to mark a special anniversary and can also do when all people are treated fairly and wrongs are put right

Answer the questions then put the answers in the correct order to reveal the missing word.

C	O	N	S	T	A	N	C	E	L	D	E	R	S
O	H	A	G	E	A	R	O	C	Y	W	U	N	E
N	O	I	S	A	A	C	L	O	R	E	R	I	C
G	U	R	C	A	L	L	T	C	E	C	C	R	U
R	S	E	B	H	A	C	M	H	L	T	W	E	M
E	E	T	O	F	U	H	A	U	A	I	N	L	E
G	R	Y	S	I	S	R	N	R	R	R	O	A	N
A	E	B	Y	G	E	I	C	C	E	I	D	N	I
T	B	S	N	F	L	S	H	H	N	P	R	D	S
I	M	E	O	J	L	T	R	T	E	S	O	G	M
O	E	R	D	P	A	I	I	R	G	S	G	E	F
N	M	P	S	I	X	A	S	S	E	M	B	L	Y
A	W	A	T	T	S	N	T	H	C	R	U	H	C
L	U	N	D	I	E	U	R	C	Y	O	U	T	H

How well do you know the United Reformed Church?

Find the answers to these questions hidden in the wordsearch.

If you need a bit of help, the correct answers are in the box at the foot of the page, though not in the correct order—that would be too easy!

The two denominations who joined to form the original United Reformed Church in 1972 (2 words)

The third denomination which joined in 1981 _____ of _____ (2 words)

The decision making body of the church which meets once a year (2 words)

The monthly magazine published by the URC

A monthly award given to children and young people who are playing their part in the mission of God

An award given to congregations who are doing their part to protect the planet

All United Reformed Congregations belong to this religion

Ordained members who serve and lead in a local congregation

The country is split into thirteen regions which are known as

If you join your church and make a commitment, you become a

A famous Congregationalist hymn writer who wrote the lyrics to Joy To The World (2 words)

This organisation used to be called "FURY"

Church Related Community Work

This UK country does not have any URC congregations

Where most of the administrative staff of the URC are based (2 words)

Different denominations working together

The first female ordained minister (2 words)

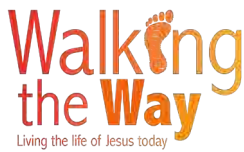
First Presbyterian woman to be ordained (2 words)

Joint public issues team

Group for Evangelism and Renewal (in the URC)

The church is guided by the Holy _____

CHRIST * CHRISTIAN * CHURCHES * CHURCH HOUSE
 CONGREGATIONAL * CONSTANCE COLTMAN * CRCW
 ECOCHURCH * ECUMENISM * ELLA GORDON * ELDERS
 GEAR * GENERAL ASSEMBLY * ISAAC WATTS * JPIT * LUNDIE
 MEMBER * N.IRELAND * PRESBYTERIAN * URC YOUTH
 REFORM * SPIRIT * SYNODS



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