



WORSHIP RESOURCE FOR CHURCHES

Introduction

On 4-6 October 2024 Children and Young people from across the Methodist Connexion, and their leaders, will gather in the NEC, Birmingham for 3Generate Children and Youth Assembly: an inclusive and diverse space for the prophetic voice of children and young people to emerge and be heard.

But what about the rest of us who don't go to 3Generate? Whether your church community is sending a group to 3Generate or not, this pack will enable you to join in. It contains three worship service outlines for any church to use in the weeks before, during and after 3Generate so we can all share in the same themes across the whole Connexion, which follow the Revised Common Lectionary.

At 3Generate the children, young people and their leaders are challenged to make time to tune into God, the world and each other, to reflect on what they hear, and then commit to responding and taking action as a disciple.



**TUNE IN TO GOD,
THE WORLD AND
EACH OTHER**



**WHAT IS GOD
SAYING?**



**WHAT
NEXT?**

This year, the overarching worship theme of 3Generate is 'Being Wrapped Up in God.' We will be using one of the pieces of the Methodist Modern Art Collection at 3Generate as a focus: **John Brokenshire's *Untitled - Pentecost***. This image was chosen by children and young people to focus on.



John Brokenshire, *Untitled - Pentecost*, 2003

*The image can be downloaded from the **Methodist Modern Art Collection website** to display during the service.*



If you are sending a group to 3Generate:

The week before, pray for them and ask them to tune in to what God is saying to them and their church community when they are there. Tell them that you are proud of them. There is a commissioning liturgy on page 10.

During 3Generate, remember them and pray for them. You can reflect on the same passage of Scripture and connect with them across time and space!

After 3Generate, welcome them back and offer a space to hear from them, and listen well. Encourage and support the group to take a lead in planning how and what they will do and share, nurturing the gifts and skills of the children and young people taking part. Welcome the authentic voices, thoughts and reflections they bring.

If you are a congregation with children and youth who aren't going:

Pray for the young people who are going on their behalf to represent their voices.

And consider whether next year might be the year to send a group!

If you are a congregation with no young people:

You may think this isn't for you, but it is for the whole Connexion to engage with. Your Church does have a role to play. Perhaps you might pray for the children in your community or local schools. Or you might ask the congregation to invite children or young people, families or carers from the local community to join you for the service. It may be your neighbours, or family, or the local school. Be bold in the name of God and trust.

As we will reflect in the third service, nothing is impossible with God. We have produced resources and guidance for churches who want to build ministry with children and young people, and may be starting from scratch.

About this pack

Each service contains lots of ideas as a menu to pick from to help you craft your own service that suits your context, whether that is in a chapel, a school assembly, chaplaincy hubs, a care home, or wherever you meet with others and God.

- **Scripture passages:** taken from the lectionary. Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition.
- **Songs and hymns:** some extra ideas to complement the regular suggestions from the **Resources Hub** and Singing the Faith.
- **Background notes:** short contextual information for each specific service, exploring how the theme connects to the Bible passages.
- **Questions:** these can be worked up into a sermon or used in a discussion; it's good to give people in the congregation a chance to discuss their faith. These questions will also work in a small group.
- **Hands-on activities:** fun, intergenerational activities to help make your services pop.
- **Prayerful art reflection:** some thoughts using Brokenshire's painting for contemplation.
- **The good news to get across:** the key idea to land, particularly for newcomers. Say it several times, make it stick!
- **Ways people can respond:** a simple, non-threatening way for people to respond personally to the good news.

We encourage you to work with children and young people in these services alongside the leaders. Wherever possible we should do things together and include all the children, however young.

If you're interested in finding out more about Mark's Gospel watch this short video: bibleproject.com/explore/video/mark

BEFORE 3GENERATE: SMALL THINGS HAVE BIG CONSEQUENCES

29 SEPTEMBER 2024

Bible readings

Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29 and Mark 9:38-42 (43-50)



Methodist Way of Life: Serve

Songs and hymns

Come, all who look to Christ today (*StF* 678)

How small a spark has lit a living fire! (*StF* 408)

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love ('Kneels at the feet of his friends') (*StF* 249)

When I needed a neighbour (*StF* 256)

When our views are varied (website only)

You call us, as you called the Twelve (website only)

Background notes

The passage from Mark is actually only part of the assigned lectionary for this Sunday, but we have decided to focus on verses 38-42. The rest of the passage uses violent imagery that may be unsuitable for young people, but of course the decision is yours.

Through all three of these service plans there is a recurring theme. In the kingdom of God there will be a great reversal, and the first will be last. Children are used as the primary example of this point, as people who at the time of writing were among those at the bottom of the social ladder.¹

Teacher, we saw...

The passage in Mark begins with a question from John, which subtly sets the theme of what follows; calling Jesus merely 'teacher' is perhaps a clue that John isn't quite fully a disciple yet, and has plenty to learn.² A lesson follows.

¹ Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A political retelling of Mark's story of Jesus* (1998) Orbis, New York pp. 258-261.

² Morna Hooker, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (1991) A&C Black, London p. 229.



Whoever is not against us is for us.

John's complaint echoes the story in the reading from Numbers. How do we react when we see good things being done by people who are not in our circle? Jesus replies with a warning against cliquishness, with what may be a secular proverb; something similar was written by Cicero.³



...no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me.

This takes the point further, implying that the good deeds are being done in Jesus' name by someone who is at the same time slandering Jesus. In a later apocryphal gospel the proverb has an additional ending:



Whoever is not against us is for us, the one who is far away today, tomorrow will be close to you.

With this addition the saying becomes more of a future hope than a description of present reality. Jesus' name is a power unleashed in the world that will prove irresistible to everyone who encounters it, even those who are using the name slanderously now.⁴

...whoever gives you a cup of water to drink...

Seemingly small actions, like giving someone some water, have huge consequences in the kingdom of God. Somewhat surprisingly, a simple act of kindness is promised an unfailing eternal reward.

If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones...

Another seemingly small action with huge consequences. The Greek word translated as 'put a stumbling-block before' is *skandalise*, which typically means to cause someone to fall away from faith or to abandon the gospel message; for instance in Mark 4:17 in the parable of the sower. It has been suggested that Jesus is referring to people within the faith community who are causing others in the same community to drop out.⁵

The consequences for this are severe; the millstone is pointedly described as one that would be turned by a donkey, therefore a large and heavy one.⁶ Jesus' only violent language, no matter how hyperbolic, is addressed to people who make the journey of faith trickier for children.

³ Hooker, *Mark*, p. 230.

⁴ Joel Marcus, *Mark 8 – 16* (2009) Yale University, New Haven p. 686.

⁵ Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, p. 262.

⁶ Hooker, *Mark*, p. 251.

Questions for discussion

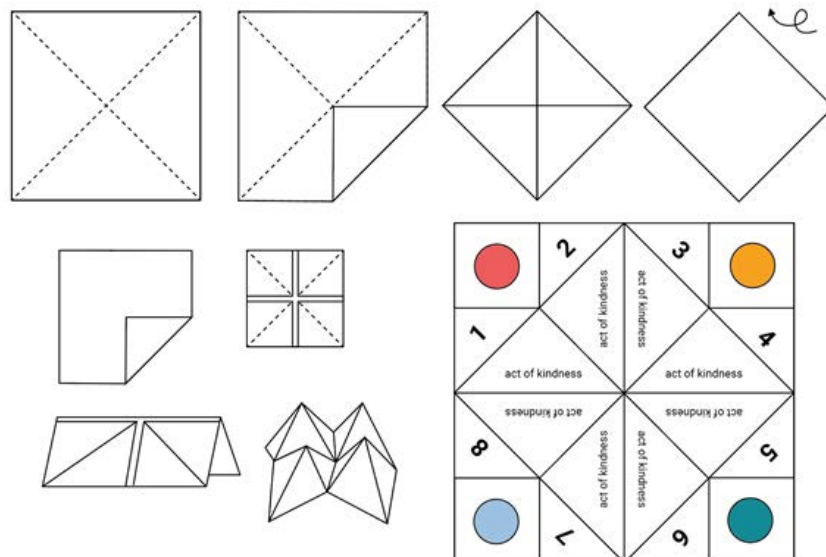
- Write the word 'clique' in the middle of a large sheet of paper. After explaining what the word means, ask people to jot down, in words and/or pictures, how being in a clique can be a problem. What do we notice about what we've expressed?
- In small groups, with people of different ages where possible, share what small acts of kindness have meant the world to you.
- Using a continuum, ask people to stand somewhere along the line between yes and no in response to this question: Is this church community guilty of putting off young people from faith? Invite a few people to share why they stood in a particular place. If a number answer 'yes', how might you repent and make amends? If not, how can you guard against it?
- In pairs reflect on this question: what gifts or skills do you have that you could offer or share with the church?

Prayerful art reflection

Looking at John Brockenshire's picture, focus on the dark blue space surrounding the white shape in the middle. Consider how this might represent what God is like – expansive, unending, peaceful. What other words come to mind?

Repeat these words to God as a prayer of praise.

Hands-on activities





- Make a small-acts-of-kindness chatterbox. Each segment can have a simple act of kindness, for example:
 - Compliment someone
 - Give a high five
 - Make a donation to a charity
 - Spend time with your pet
 - Message a friend that you haven't spoken to for a while
- Invite everyone to jot down an act of kindness on a slip of paper (it must be ten words or less!) and place them all in a bowl. Each person can then pick one at random to carry out the following week.
- In groups of three or four, act out a simple scene where one person is left out. Repeat the scene but this time, adapt it so the person is actively included. Ask what made the difference?
- Play with the words from Mark 9:40: 'Whoever is not against us is for us'. Say each word in different ways: loudly, quietly, slowly, quickly, gently, boldly and so on. Small groups could say the verse with each word delivered in a different style.
- Watch the after movie from 3Generate 2023, available here: methodist.org.uk/3Gen. In twos or threes discuss what strikes you about what children and young people say. What surprises you? What inspires you? What gives a sense of hopefulness?
- Play the short film "Today": max7.org/en/resource/TODAY
- If there are no children and young people in your church community, think about a child or young person you know. Maybe a grandchild, neighbour or local friend or family member. Use people figures such as Lego minifigures, paper cut outs or make them from modelling clay. Prayerfully bring them before God and ask God to be present in their life and for you to be a loving support where that is possible.

The good news to get across

Small acts of kindness have eternal rewards in God's kingdom; they really matter. Our words and actions can help others to belong or feel excluded.

Ways people can respond

- Commit to doing small acts of kindness each day, and to do what you can to make church an inclusive space for everyone.
- Invite everyone to jot down their gift or skill that they already use or would like to offer in service for the church. Reflect on how your faith community could welcome and incorporate these so that people of all ages can contribute.

- Consider whether people would be interested in volunteering at 3Generate next year. How could they offer their gifts and skills to help make the event happen? Watch this short film where Jude Levermore shares about why volunteering matters: vimeo.com/927939067?share=copy



Commissioning of Young People going to 3Generate

The whole Church community celebrates children, young people and the leaders and congregation who journey alongside them.

This church community recognises and celebrates the important role children and young people play in our church's life and mission. We want to recognise them as disciples now, and encourage and nurture their growth in faith, walking the way of Jesus today.

We call forward the children and young people and their leaders who are attending 3Generate Children and Youth Assembly, to stand together at the front of the church.

Service leader calls them up individually by name

The Commissioning

Children and young people, you will be attending this national gathering from across the Methodist Connexion and will join together in conversation, activity, fun, fellowship and worship.

We ask you to consider the following promises:

- We will make space to tune into God, and will look for ways to explore what God is saying to us through the experiences we have in discussions, activities, sport, art, worship and prayer and through living out a Methodist Way of Life.
- We will make space to think and talk about how we will share our experiences with others, and will think about what actions we might take on our return to make a difference in our school, college, church or community.

Answer: Through listening for God, we will.

Hand out a Methodist Way of Life Pocket Guide to each person to take on the journey as they return to their seats: methodistpublishing.org.uk/features/a-methodist-way-of-life

Church, you have responded to a calling from God to a vocation to serve children and young people here in ... We now respond to our baptism promises to support children in their faith journey.

To the youth leaders:

We ask you to make the following promises as a disciple, and to show your love of God and your desire to share that love in your ministry.

Do you commit to grow in your own wondering about God?

Through sharing the stories of God and through prayer, will you support the children and young people in this church in their own wondering about God?

Will you continue to grow in God's love, and to support their participation in the life, mission and leadership of the Church and Community and in exploring new faith adventures?

Will you freely share about your faith and your exploration of faith?

Answer: With God's help, we will.

To the whole congregation:

We respond to the baptism promise of supporting children and young people in their discipleship journey. We promise to pray for each other, for the children and young people and for those who are called to be alongside them and to pray for 3Generate. We promise to share and live out our faith as an example to each other, and to learn more about the God we serve with the children, young people and families in our midst.

Let us pray.

God of many names, you give each of us special gifts and skills, whether we are a child, a young person or an adult, and today we celebrate your call on all of us as disciples.

A child or young person: We thank you God that you will give us all we need, and that we can always trust in you to lead us in our faith discovery.

A youth leader: We thank you that through our wondering and exploring of the stories of faith, we can grow in your love together as church.

A congregation member: May our prayers and your blessing be felt and upon those journeying to 3Generate and we pray that they Tune in to God, learn, pray and respond together.

Amen.

DURING 3GENERATE: WRAPPED UP IN GOD

6 OCTOBER 2024

Bible readings

Job 1:1, 2:1-10 and Mark 10:(2-12) 13-16



Methodist Way of Life: Pray

Songs and hymns

Best of all is God is with us (StF 610)

Heaven shall not wait (StF 701)

Jesus calls us here to meet him (StF 28)

Only by grace can we enter (StF 565)

Safe in the shadow of the Lord (StF 509)

Says Jesus, 'Come and gather round' (StF 510)

Background notes

Again, we focus on part of the gospel lectionary this week, avoiding the first section on divorce, which may be triggering and upsetting for young people. The second section stands as an independent tradition which is a doublet with last week's passage,¹ continuing the theme of children revealing the meaning of true discipleship.² Again, it goes without saying that you may choose to read the whole passage.

The disciples spoke sternly to them.

The disciples get it wrong again. They are once more concerned with status;³ while Jesus is committed to inclusivity, his disciples are committed to exclusivity. Their rebuke to the people who brought the children to Jesus is strongly worded.⁴

¹ Marcus, *Mark 8 – 16*, p. 716.

² Hooker, *Mark*, p. 238.

³ Ibid. p. 238.

⁴ Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, p. 267

... when Jesus saw this, he was indignant ...

This is omitted from Matthew and Luke's versions of the stories. These authors are less ready than Mark to criticise the disciples.⁵ Perhaps one part of the reason for Jesus' indignation is that the disciples have already been clearly told (in last week's passage) that they are to welcome children.⁶

... it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs...

We are not given much of an explanation of why this is so. Perhaps from the context it is something to do with the way that children receive it as pure gift, rather than something that is deserved because of our status.⁷

The statement is a reversal of commonly held views of piety. A contemporary piece of writing shows that children were often regarded as a distraction from the serious adult forms of piety, such as reading the Torah.⁸ It remains a shocking statement to this day.

...he took them up in his arms...

The original Greek word *enagkalisamenos* is unique here in the New Testament,⁹ and carries a sense of being embraced in someone's bent arms. The children are wrapped up in God, a symbol of the joy of the kingdom of God.¹⁰

It may also point towards the ultimate restoration of the whole of creation; the hope that one day everything will be wrapped up in God. This is expressed beautifully in Victor of Antioch's commentary on Mark from the 5th century:

Fitly does he take them up into his arms to bless them, as it were, lifting into his own bosom, and reconciling himself to his creation, which in the beginning fell from him, and was separated from him.

Questions for discussion

- In small groups try to look at the way your church is set up from the perspective of a small child. What aspects of your life together are welcoming, and which are off-putting or excluding? Each group could

5 Hooker, *Mark*, p. 238.

6 Marcus, *Mark 8 – 16*, p. 718.

7 Hooker, *Mark*, p. 239.

8 Marcus, *Mark 8 – 16*, p. 718.

9 Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, p. 266.

10 Hooker, *Mark*, p. 239.

- take a different aspect to reflect on: services, physical spaces, notices and signs, groups and activities. If these groups include children and young people, encourage them to share their ideas and experiences, listening well to what they have to say.
- Do you think of being in God's presence as a gift, or a right?
- On a long roll of paper, write the words 'God's presence' large in the centre. Invite everyone to write, draw or jot down where they have encountered God – the times and places.
- Consider what it feels like to be wrapped up in God, has this been a part of our experience?

Prayerful art reflection

Looking at John Brockenshire's picture, focus on the white dove-like shape in the centre with outstretched wings. Reflect on these words of Scripture:

*As an eagle stirs up its nest,
and hovers over its young;
as it spreads its wings, takes them up,
and bears them aloft on its pinions,
the Lord alone guided him*
Deuteronomy 32:11

*Guard me as the apple of the eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings.*
Psalm 17:8

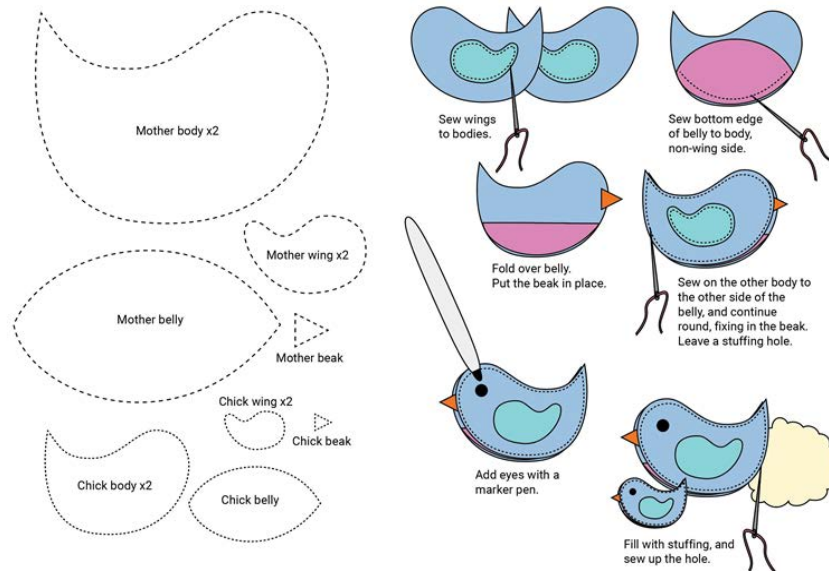
*May the Lord reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward
from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for
refuge!*
Ruth 2:12

*How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers
her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!*
Matthew 23:37

In your heart, come to God and allow yourself to be wrapped up in the wings of love.

Hands-on Activities

- Wrapping up: gather a number of things to have fun getting 'wrapped up' in, for example a duvet, blanket, onesie, bubble wrap (think safety!), woolly jumper or big coat. Wonder together about why these can feel so comforting and how it may help to imagine God's presence with us



in a similar way.

- Tune in to God together through offering a selection of images that inspire the sense of God's presence with us. Use photo images or recommend a set of cards to buy. Each person can choose one and share why they picked it. Share a moment of prayer and thank God for being with us.
- Make mother-bird and chicks from felt. These can be simple flat cut-outs glued together, or could be sewn and stuffed.
- Using the Dwell app, listen to the passage from Mark being read aloud. There are options for different translations and voices, including children. Tune in to God together and notice how we react to these. Do we feel more in God's presence when hearing one rather than another? Share thoughts with people sat next to you.
- Watch this retelling of the passage from Mark's Gospel: youtu.be/VPUMDVBO7dY?si=xw7O6itPRF17UuJF
- Play short excerpts of different kinds of music: place 'yes', 'no', 'maybe' words around the space and ask people to stand by one in response to how much it brings them into the presence of God. Reflect on how different music had a different effect on each of them.

- If there are no children and young people in your church community, think back to the child or young person you brought to mind last time. Discuss with one or two other people a way you might connect with them in the coming week. It could be saying hello when you see them, sending a message or writing a note. Ask God to help you find a way to show you care.

The good news to get across

You too can be wrapped up in God's loving arms. God's there right now, waiting.

Ways people can respond

In your heart, come to God and allow yourself to be wrapped up in the wings of love. Pray for all the children and young people participating in 3Generate this weekend, that they would know God's loving presence with them in a host of different ways.

AFTER 3GENERATE: ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE

13 OCTOBER 2024

Bible readings

Amos 5:6-7, 10-15 and Mark 10:17-31



Methodist Way of Life: Open

Songs and hymns

A rich young man came seeking (StF 243)

God moves in a mysterious way (StF 104)

God will make a way where there is no way (website only)

Great God, your love has called us here (StF 499)

In the wonder of creation (StF 110)

Teach me, my God and King (StF 668)

Background notes

...a man ran up and knelt before him...

In Mark's version of this story we aren't told much about the man at this point. Matthew tells us that he is young, and Luke that he is a ruler. Later we find out in verse 22 that he is a wealthy, and therefore presumably a landowner.¹

...go...

There is an irony that the man who has everything has one thing missing.²

The Greek word translated simply here as 'go' is *hupage*, which is normally used by Mark in healing stories, presented as 'get up.' We might like to see this as an invitation to the man to be healed of his sickness of accumulation.³

¹ Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, p. 272.

² Marcus, *Mark 8 – 16*, p. 727.

³ Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, p. 273.



...sell what you own...

Jesus didn't expect everyone to subscribe to such radical poverty. This reads as a prescription to this individual to cure him of his distorted view of spirituality caused by his wealth, and the implied exploitation of people experiencing poverty as a result.⁴

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.

This saying of Jesus is both hyperbolic and humorous.⁵ A similar saying is found in the Babylonian Talmud, with an elephant as the subject; Jesus appears to have substituted a camel, the latest animal known to his audience.⁶ We should resist the temptation to water down the saying; for instance, the notion that there was a gate in the walls of Jerusalem called the 'Needle Gate' that camels could squeeze through is a fallacy.⁷

...for God all things are possible.

This is the first time that Jesus addresses the fact that his teachings sound implausible.⁸ There are three instances in Mark which talk about God making the impossible possible, each mirroring and reversing the things that can destroy seed in the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-20):

- demons (Mark 9:23)
- love of possessions (here, Mark 10:27)
- apostasy (Mark 14:36).⁹

The children and young people who attended 3Generate will have tuned in to God, to hear what God wants to say to the Methodist Church. Some of the things may sound impossible. But we know that for God, all things are possible. Have faith.

Questions for discussion

- Using emoji flashcards, or simple drawings of a happy, sad, confused, angry or surprised face, invite everyone to place a sticker dot on the one which is closest to their own reaction to the question: How does the encounter with Jesus and the wealthy man make you feel? Then have a brief conversation in pairs to share responses.

⁴ Marcus, *Mark 8 – 16*, p. 728-729.

⁵ Hooker, *Mark*, p. 243.

⁶ Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, p. 275.

⁷ Marcus, *Mark 8 – 16*, p. 731.

⁸ Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, p. 275.

⁹ Marcus, *Mark 8 – 16*, p. 732.

- In small groups talk about what your wildest dreams are for God's kingdom to come, both in your personal life and in the church community. Invite people to draw a simple sketch in response to this before they begin talking.
- When have you experienced God making the impossible possible?

Prayerful art reflection

Focus on the sense of movement in the painting: what words come to mind to describe it?

Reflect on this line from Scripture, used in Charles Wesley's carol 'Hark the herald angels sing':

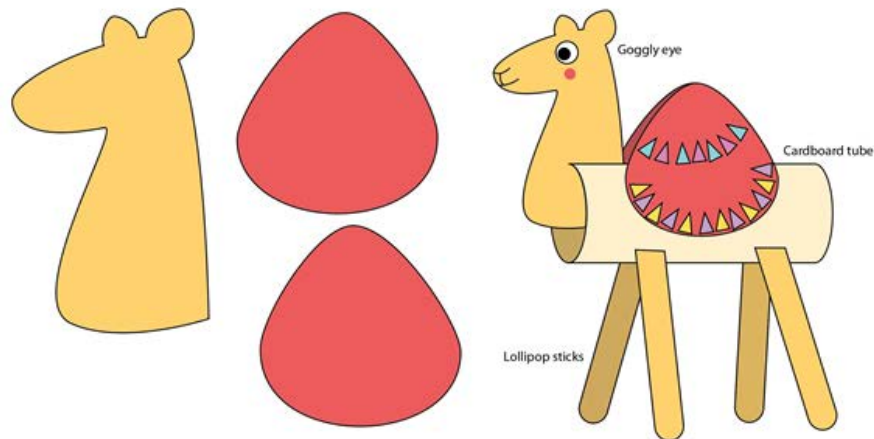
But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings.

Malachi 4:2

Bring to God any areas of your life that need healing.

Hands-on activities

- Make model camels from a toilet roll tubes, card and lollipop sticks.



- Watch this version of the story of Jesus meeting the rich young ruler: [youtube.com/watch?v=XHuFQnjqweY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHuFQnjqweY)
- In small groups of three or four, consider world situations which feel impossible right now. Talk about small actions which we can take that may help or make a difference: how could you work together, being agents of change, to bring about a better world?

- Make a human knot, in a group of five or six people, by standing in a circle facing each other. Each person raises their left hand and holds hands with someone across the circle. Then they raise their right hand and hold the hand of another person diagonally across the circle. This creates a complex knot of intertwined hands. The group now has to work together to try and untangle without letting go of each others' hands. Once the group has been successful, talk about how possible or impossible the task felt. What made the difference?
- If there are no children and young people in your church community, use a local map to put small stickers where they are; in schools, nurseries, uniformed groups, etc. Choose one of these to talk about ways you could connect with the children and young people there. Could you bless the staff in the school by baking cakes? Could you ask the uniform group if they need help with anything? Why not consider sending a Flourish card to a younger person you know? Take a look at these here: methodistpublishing.org.uk/features/flourish-schools

The good news to get across

For God all things are possible.

Ways people can respond

Jesus said to the wealthy man, "You lack one thing." Take a few moments to reflect on what you need to let go of. And ask for God to make this impossible change a reality.

If children and young people have returned from 3Generate with specific issues or matters they'd like to explore further, spend time listening and consider how your church community could respond and offer support.

