



Church of Ireland Children's Ministry LENT & EASTER NEWSLETTER 2019



We hope that you glean some new ideas for journeying through Lent and Easter this year, whatever your context. We pray that you will have space to declutter and make room for God's peace, presence and purpose. We pray that your time spent exploring faith with children will be full of ignited moments and that the learning will be reciprocal.



Lent in a Bag:

www.buildingfaith.org have developed a wonderful 'Lent in a Bag' Initiative that is useful for both Church and Home.

They discovered that distributing small bags - cloth, paper, or ziplock bags - with symbols of the season - assists individuals and families in practicing Lent at home. In addition to the items in the bag, they include instructions and reflections (on purple paper of course) to go with each item.

Choose one night of the week and invite those around your table to pick one of the symbols as a starting point for conversation for the whole group, including children.

Put an instruction sheet, sand, a rock, a little wooden peg/figure and a candle into your bag. Each week read about what the symbol relates to. Find out more about the symbols here: <https://www.buildfaith.org/lent-in-a-bag/?fbclid=IwAR0eoJDsQTS1wloxobBDhLWKMJoIpYA4qv2HknjIN4yIIntHjriIzu0k2kc>

Tracing Cross

The Building Faith Editor also has a 'Top Pick' of a Lord's Prayer Tracing Cross, which begins as a craft but ends as a reflective prayer for people of all ages.

They have instructions and templates of the Cross and Prayer here: <https://www.buildfaith.org/lords-prayer-tracing-cross/>



Knitting the Last Supper

What about setting up a group interested in knitting in your parish to knit the scene of the Last Supper? People of all ages with an interest in knitting can come together once a week for chats and knits and then people can carry on with the project in their own time. This brings together people from different sections of the church and is a very tangible, playable visual for children of all ages. Get the pattern here:

<https://revruth.wordpress.com/2010/02/28/knitted-last-supper-pattern/>





Holy Week in a Box

From bags to boxes – a wonderful initiative for exploring Holy Week is Holy Week in a Box.

Victoria Beech from GodVenture has adapted a really great version of Holy Week in a Box and even has some suggestions as to where to get the different items!

<http://godventure.co.uk/news/holy-week-boxes/>

Kidsfriendly.org.nz have a hand out that shows step by step how they used a different version of Holy Week in a Box during a family service. It also includes links to the instructions. <http://www.kidsfriendly.org.nz/wp-content/Uploads/The-Kids-Friendly-Holy-Week-Box.pdf>



St Patrick's Day:

The Church of Ireland Council for Mission are putting together an All Age Service Outline on the **Radiant Faith of Saint Patrick**. Keep an eye out for it as our sneaky peek showed some lovely creative ideas for interactive games and action based storytelling. We'll be posting it in the News Section of our own website www.cm.ireland.anglican.org so watch out!



Creative Prayer Ideas:

Explore different ways for children to talk to God this season. In this creative prayer video, Lynn Storey looks at reflective ideas alongside more energetic ideas, with some take home prayer ideas included for good measure. Why not make prayer a focus this Lent? <https://youtu.be/YGx2YDNPoLA>





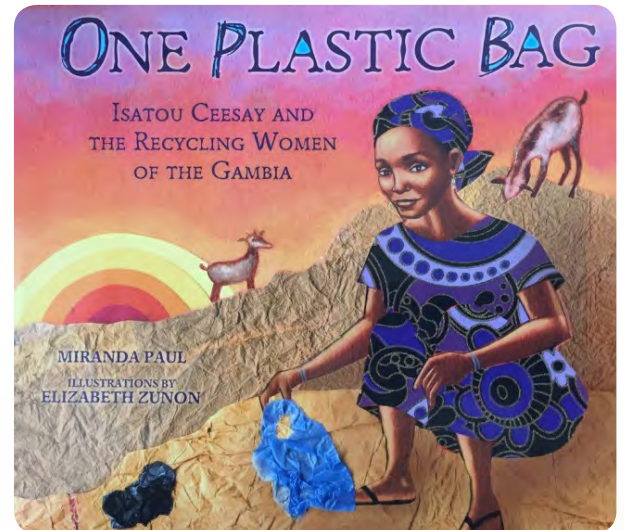
Holy Week & Easter Lego Challenge:



Last year we ran this as a Facebook Challenge and we were amazed at the enthusiastic response. This year, we have a link to all the instructions so that you can run your own Holy Week and Easter Lego Challenge, encouraging families who are involved in Church to photograph the daily constructions as they learn about the sequence of events of Holy Week together.

<http://www.cm.ireland.anglican.org/holy-week-lego-easter-challenge/>

#Pennies4Plastics



Check out this creative initiative by the Bishops' Appeal, Eco-Congregation and the RCB for reducing your plastic waste this Lent. The programme also raises funds for recycling initiatives in the Gambia, reducing the amount of plastic being burned or ending up in our oceans. The woman spearheading this initiative is an inspirational figure and her story is told in a children's book that is available in a spoken version on Youtube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHskUChyKgs>

(Story begins at 1:06)

*Scientists estimate that around 8 million tonnes of plastic is ending up in the ocean each year - -that's the weight of roughly **a billion elephants** or **47 million blue whales**.*

Prayer for the Ocean: <https://www.arocha.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Prayer-for-the-Oceans.pdf>

For all the #Pennies4Plastics information, actions, prayers and ideas for Assemblies and All Age Services, visit: <http://www.bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org/get-involved/>



The Church, Children and Mental Health:

When we look at the example of Jesus in the Gospel accounts, we see someone deeply concerned with the needs of the people he encounters. When their stomachs are empty, he takes time to fill them; when they are feeling ashamed by actions they regret, he sits with them in their hurt; when they are feeling lonely and isolated, he makes sure they have community to turn to. Jesus was very much concerned with people's spiritual lives, but those weren't the only needs he sought to meet in them. He realised there were different and significant needs in the whole person; spirit, mind and body.

In our ministries, particularly with children and young people, we are very good at ensuring we care for certain parts of those who attend. We care for their bodies, carrying out thorough risk assessments, ensuring medical information on registration forms are returned to us, and make sure we have the right number of leaders to ensure proper oversight. We also put great energy into caring for their spiritual well-being, committing to teaching the stories and words that "lead to eternal life", to answering questions, sitting with

their doubts, and praying for their eyes to be opened to truth. But when it comes to emotional and mental well-being, we often have no game plan. "I know it's important, but I don't really know what doing it looks like to do it..." we might say. We know these are needs our children have, but we hope that maybe in meeting their physical and spiritual needs, their mental well-being will follow.

Dr. Dan Siegel (author of "The Whole Brain Child") outlines that the emotional needs to be met in children are to feel safe, soothed, seen and secure.

When we consider our ministries, are we actively striving to build an environment where they feel seen in a way that goes beyond being ticked in or out on a registration form, are we committed to ensuring with our forms and policies of discipline that they feel safe and held, are we soothing by helping them acknowledge and process big emotions and situations, are we offering a security that comes from a sense of belonging to a group, irrespective of who they are, where they come from or what they do.

If they aren't feeling these things,

the question is whether they will be in a place of being able to accept and process the big spiritual questions and realities we are hoping they will start to wrestle with. In offering them these things, this firm foundation, it provides the launching pad from which they can safely go out to explore God's great plan for them.

In the diocesan sessions on helping leaders in issues of children's mental health, we'll be looking at what it means to run ministries and groups where all the needs of the child are met. We'll also be looking at the importance of minding our own mental health, and the impact that taking the time to care for ourselves can have on the young people we work with.

Tom Tate is a part-time children's & youth worker in Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. He is also a qualified psychotherapist working with clients in private practice, and delivering talks with WhyMind in a number of settings encouraging and equipping people with tools to mind their mental health. You can find out more about Tom and this work at www.WhyMind.ie.





Prayers & Acts of Kindness this Lent:

Check out some really simple but thought provoking prayers for use during Lent. For more activities and ideas for Living Lent Generously, have a look at 40Acts: <https://40acts.org.uk/about/40acts-lent-prayers-for-children-aged-5-11-and-onwards/>

An easy activity which can help children understand the idea of sacrifice during Lent is to donate some of their old clothes or toys to a charity or someone else who needs them more. This Lent prayer for children can be prayed when giving up their things for others.

Dear God,

Thank You that You provide for all our needs.

Thank You that we can trust You to turn the small things we give You into something big that can make a huge difference.

Help us to be generous with everything we have, just as You are so generous in giving us these things.

Amen.



Plastic Easter Egg Planters

YOU WILL NEED:

- > A Plastic Egg
- > A laminated piece of card to make a stand
- > Stickers to decorate outside of egg/laminated card stand around
- > Moist Cotton Wool
- > Cress Seeds

HOW TO:

1. Decorate the egg and the laminated card for stand with some stickers.
2. Measure the laminated card around the base of the egg and secure with some sellotape.
3. Open the egg and place moist cotton wool in the bottom.
4. Sprinkle on a few cress seeds.
5. Close the egg over and when you get home put it on a sunny windowsill and water it each day.

TALK ABOUT:

The seeds look dead and lifeless when placed in the egg which reminds us of when Jesus' friends thought he would never be with them again and his body was placed in the tomb. But as the seeds grow and new life appears as the cress grows, it reminds us of the Resurrection of Jesus. What once was thought to be dead is now alive.

We can also be reminded of the new life we can have through Jesus

