



All about church

MEETING AIM

To explore the essence and key components of church.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 3:13-19

BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

Here we see Jesus start to form a community around him – not just a group of people curious to see a miracle or hear his teaching, but people whom he can mentor intentionally and send out to do work. What does the gathering and empowerment tell us about church then and now? For many young people, church can seem boring or confusing, but for the first disciples, living in community, learning from Jesus and doing his work was life-changing. How can we recapture this revolutionary nature in our worshipping communities today?

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Ask them what they think church is.

INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

You will need: short clip from Mr Bean Goes to Church; pictures of church from around the world

Watch the clip and chat together about how we laugh at him not knowing what to do in church. We know this is not real church and just a comedy clip but point out that church can seem a strange place to people with no experience of it. Explain that over the next four sessions we will be trying to work out what church actually is. Then we can be really well equipped to reimagine church.

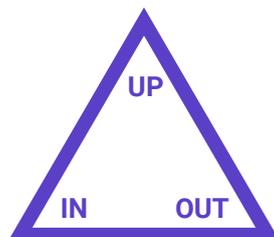
Say that Western-style church is not the only way to do church. Share some pictures of different expressions of church from around the world, or ask the young people to search online for them now.

Chat about what seems good about these different churches.

Explain that the Greek word *ekklesia* from which our word 'church' comes from means 'called out'. It is nothing to do with buildings, but is used to describe the disciples being 'called out' by Jesus.

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

You will need: Bibles; triangle diagram



Ask someone in the group to read the Bible passage aloud. Start by saying that the apostles were sent out on a mission. We read about and watch characters in stories and films being trained by their leader and then sent on a mission but here we read about the apostles being with Jesus, learning from him and then being sent out. The word 'apostle' literally means 'sent out' in Greek.

Read the Bible passage a second time. Ask what we can learn from this. Explain that the Church was started by Jesus as a key part of his ministry on earth. Belonging to the Church is all about a relationship with Jesus (being with him), serving Jesus (being sent out) and doing things in community (the twelve disciples with Jesus). Draw attention to the fact that the apostles were not on their own. You might want to read Luke 8:1-3 to explore the idea that it wasn't just twelve men following Jesus!

Show the triangle diagram to the group and ask what they think this has to do with church. What do the three words mean? Try to guide the conversation to the idea that 'up' is worship, 'in' is being in community with each other and God, and 'out' is reaching out in mission. We should have all three of these elements in church. A fourth element that joins churches together is connectedness, as Christians are connected in 'the body of Christ' (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).

Depending on time you may also like to think about connectedness through time as well as space, as each generation of churches is connected together through history. Church is a community called to live

in a rhythm of worship and mission, to be with Jesus, and to be sent out.

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Discuss the following questions together:

- What do you think it was like to be part of this community following Jesus?
- What effect do you think being commissioned had on the twelve?
- How does this apply to our church now?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

You will need: paper; pens; scissors

Ask the young people to cut out a triangle from paper and label the corners of the triangle with the words 'up', 'in' and 'out'. Ask them to think about what happens in their own church context with mission, community and worship, and write words or draw pictures to describe these on the paper triangles.

- What sort of worship takes place at your church?
- Does your church have any mission outreach projects?
- What sort of church community activities happen?
- How is your church connected to other churches?

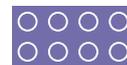
When the triangles are finished share them with the group, and talk about what people have written.

PRAYER 5 MINS

You will need: the triangles from 'Creative response'

Ask the group to hold their triangles up to the camera. First pray for worship, asking God to inspire us in our worship so that we can express our faith through the worship we bring to God. Secondly pray for our church community, that we may be faithful followers of Christ and make our community a safe, hospitable, welcoming place. Thirdly, pray for mission as we reach out to share our faith with others. Finally, pray for the worldwide Church, our connectedness and our Christian brothers and sisters wherever they are.

This session was inspired by ideas from the Premier Youth and Children's Work archive, adapted by **ALEX TAYLOR**.



Living stones

MEETING AIM

To move away from the idea of church as a building or institution and instead to think about it as a living community built on the principles taught to us by Jesus.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Peter 2:1-10

BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

Many young people might feel disconnected from church, but this passage explores the idea that we ourselves are the living building blocks that church is made of. We need to help our group realise that they are as vital a part of the Church as anyone else. We might also need to advocate to our church leadership (or better, empower our young people to do so).

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days.

INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

You will need: list of objects such as boat, tree, table, house, wheel or cart

Explain that you're going to call out some objects, and the young people have to turn themselves into those objects, using whatever they have in their room. They can use whatever props they can find, but have to be part of their 'sculpture' themselves. Explain that they can lie on the floor (provided they can still be seen on camera) or stand to create a 3D effect. You can vary the game by giving different ideas to the different young people and then asking everyone else to guess the shapes. Using bodies as props will link to the idea of living stones in the Bible passage.

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

You will need: Bibles; this passage from *The Message*

Introduce the theme by saying that we may wonder what God wants our churches and communities to be like, but in this passage Peter give us some clues. Ask someone to read 1 Peter 2:1-10, asking everyone to follow. Encourage the young people to mark up any words or parts of the passage they don't understand.

Go through the questions that the young people have about what Peter is saying here. He is not talking literally about stones; we are not called to physically build a building. Say that this description of us as "living stones" who can build the Church is an image used to help us understand. Lots of people Jesus and his disciples spoke to were familiar with how buildings were built. Peter describes the Church as a living, spiritual house which is made up of living, breathing people – the stones.

Explain that the key idea here is community because all the living stones, the people, make up the Church with Jesus as their cornerstone, on whom all the others rest. Jesus is the foundation who holds the building, the community, together.

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Discuss the following questions together:

- Have you ever been chosen for anything at school, sport or other activities?
- How did you feel? (Be sensitive: you may also ask how it feels not to be chosen, or missed out.)
- How might God use you to build the Church?
- What gifts and talents do you have that can be used to build community?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

You will need: stones; art materials

Make sure everyone has a clean stone (you might need to deliver these beforehand). Ask the group to look at their stone carefully, hold it in their hand and think about the following questions:

- What does your stone look and feel like?
- Where might the stone have come from originally: the sea, a beach, a mountain, a riverbed?
- How old might it be?
- Who has walked on it?
- Who might have held it?

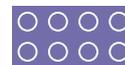
Say that the stones may at first look dull and boring but they can have a great story to tell. Decorate each stone with paint or pens. They can write their name on to the stone and also words like 'chosen', 'precious', 'trust', or 'loved'. When everyone has finished, they should place their stone in clear view of their camera.

Say that God knows each of us by name and we are important to him. Each one of us has unique gifts and talents. Say that God has chosen them to build his Church. If possible, take a screen shot of all the stones and send it to everyone in the group.

PRAYER 5 MINS

Using the stones as a central point for focus, encourage the group to choose one other person to pray for: they are going to focus on this person as a "living stone" and part of the community – it doesn't matter if they know them well or not.

Pray for that person to be like a "living stone" in church. Pray for them to be a faithful servant of God. Ask for them to know the firm foundations of God's love and care. Ask that they will work together in community with others, using their gifts and talents to God's glory. Close by praying that each of us become the firm foundations, building community and God's Church where we are and for those near us.



Passing it on

MEETING AIM

To focus on some of the key elements of church taught to us by Jesus, particularly mission and passing on our faith to others.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 1:29-42; Matthew 28:19-20

BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (FaceTime or Zoom etc). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

John the Baptist's ministry was to prepare the way for Jesus, and here he prepares to hand that ministry on. We also encounter one of John's disciples, Andrew, pass the news of Jesus onto his brother Simon, whom Jesus immediately calls Peter. Passing on our faith doesn't need to be dramatic, like John's (though it can be); we can tell others the good news in much simpler ways, like Andrew does with Peter.

JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days.

INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

You will need: stopwatch or smartphone
Challenge people to talk for a minute about something they are passionate about. They should try to persuade the others that they should get involved in their passion, be it Liverpool FC, Stormzy, coding or even the *Eurovision Song Contest*.

After each volunteer has sold their passion, ask everyone else how likely they are to check it out. What elements make up the best 'sales pitch'?

BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

You will need: copies of the dramatic reading
Send this script (from John 1:29-42) to some of the young people and ask them to act it out this passage:

Narrator: The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him.

John: Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I

meant when I said: "A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me." I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptising with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.

Narrator: Then John gave this testimony.

John: I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptise with water told me: "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit." I have seen and I testify that this is God's chosen one.

Narrator: The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. They testified that Jesus was the Son of God. When John saw Jesus passing by, he spoke.

John: Look, the Lamb of God!

Narrator: The two disciples left John and went after Jesus. Jesus asked the two.

Jesus: What do you want?

Andrew: Where are you staying?

Narrator: Jesus showed them, and Andrew and the other disciple stayed with him for the whole day. Later Andrew went to find his brother, Simon.

Andrew: We have found the Messiah, the one sent by God to save us!

Narrator: Andrew took Simon to meet Jesus.

Jesus: You are Simon, but you will be called the Rock.

Get the group to look up Matthew 28:19-20 and ask someone to read it aloud. Talk about the inspiring instructions Jesus gives us, but at the same time remind the group that when we read these commands there is great responsibility. However, remember Jesus promises always to be with us to help us, forever.

Explain that John the Baptist is a key character in this story as someone who has to pass his baton on. He has prepared the way for Jesus, telling people about who Jesus is and spreading God's word. Now it is time for him to hand over the baton to Jesus who in turn hands it to the disciples. Jesus calls the disciples – who are a very unlikely group; are they going to be up to the job?

Well, they do hand on the baton of faith and mission, and ultimately it is handed onto us. What are we going to do with it?

Spend some time praying for the courage to hand on our faith to others even if we feel ordinary or not up to the job. Pray that we have the confidence to take on the baton and pass it on.

CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Carry on your discussion of the Bible passages using these questions:

- How do you think John felt?
- If you were to be like Andrew, how would you describe Jesus to your friends and family?
- Why is it important to pass on our faith?
- What difficulties do we fear when we try to share our faith with others?
- How can we pass on our faith to others?

CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

Explain that it's important to be ready to answer the question: "Why are you a Christian?" Put the young people into breakout rooms and ask them to come up with a few sentences each. Encourage them to think about how they got to know Jesus, what it means to follow him and how that works itself out in their lives. Give them enough time to think about this – they may want to write their sentences down.

Bring everyone back together and invite any volunteers to share what they have written. Our own stories are powerful ways to pass on our faith. Together, brainstorm some other, non-verbal ways that we can pass on our faith (eg showing Jesus' love to others through acts of kindness or service).

PRAYER 5 MINS

You will need: paper; pens or pencils; scissors

Make sure everyone has paper, pens and scissors. Show the group how to create paper chains of people. Ask the young people to write on the first few paper people the names of those who passed their faith onto them. Then they should write their own name on the next person. Finally, ask them who they might want to pass their faith onto. They should write these names on the remaining paper.

Holding the paper chains of people, ask the group to give thanks for those who passed their faith onto them, and for those they are hoping to pass their faith onto. You could do this as silent prayer or out loud.

This session was inspired by ideas from the *Premier Youth and Children's Work* archive, adapted by **ALEX TAYLOR**.



Community

MEETING AIM

To explore the early Church to help us reimagine what church could look like today.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 2:42-47

BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

The community described at the end of Acts 2 (and the end of Acts 4) will seem very different from our own. Over the intervening 2,000 years, traditions and ways of organisation have grown up around the Church. Many of these proved necessary as the Church grew, but how much can we learn about Church today from the early Church?

JOINING THE SESSION

5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: chocolate bars; wrapping paper; sticky tape

Before the session, deliver or post a chocolate bar to each of the members of your group. Ask them to wrap their chocolate bar up, and chat about these questions as they do so. (If they don't have any wrapping paper, they could use newspaper, kitchen foil or anything else suitable they can find.)

- What is the best thing you have been given?
- When you hear 'giving' talked about in church, what does this refer to? What do you give?
- What things could you give?
- Is it easier to give to those who give to you?
- Are there people you find it hard to give to?

- What good things have been given to you by the church? (Not focusing so much on material things but on less tangible things such as love, encouragement or care.)

Explain that they are going to give their chocolate bar away, not expecting anything in return. Who might they share their chocolate with?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

10 MINS

You will need: Bibles

Ask someone in the group to read out this week's passage. Ask the group what elements of church they can recognise in this Bible reading. Can they find worship, community, connectedness and mission?

Look for the word 'together' in the passage. Ask how many times it occurs and ask someone to read out the sentences where the word 'together' occurs. Discuss what this shows us about the early Church community and how they showed how much they belonged to God by how they belonged together. Explain that when the first Christians met together to make the first church they didn't meet in a building like ours. They met together in people's homes and outside. Ask what the advantages of meeting in this way could be, both then and now?

Talk about how they looked after each other and were generous in sharing all that they had, both food and possessions, even though in the first century many of the Christians were poor and had very little to share. Explain how they were welcoming to others and included people of different backgrounds, cultures and financial situations.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the group to discuss these questions:

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- What were the key things the early Church did?
- What did they share and how?
- Why do you think they were glad about giving?
- Does this sound like church today?
- Would you like to belong to a church like this?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

Challenge the young people to come up with pictures that illustrate these four elements of church, arising from today's passage: worship, community, mission, connectedness.

Give a few minutes for the group to search the internet and make their choices. Then invite everyone to share their pictures and chat about why they chose them. How do they illustrate what the early Church was like? How vital were these aspects of church for them in their day-to-day lives?

Ask the group: How are these parts of church a part of your life today? Which are important to you? Why? Are there any of these elements that you feel should become more important to you? Do you want to change anything as a result? What could church look like if all these foundations were there?

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: candle or film clip of a candle

Show a film clip of a candle, or light a candle and place it in front of your camera. Invite the group to watch the candle and think about their friends whom they would like to know about God's love. Pray about how the Church can meet our friends where they are (both physically where they live and where they are in their lives, emotionally and spiritually). Pray for those people you don't know who live in your neighbourhood; pray that the church can reach out to them too.

Pray that the group would have the confidence to reach out and tell of their faith, no matter how difficult it is. Pray for the light of the world to shine from them and show Jesus' love.