

LENT

EASTER

UNDER 5'S
INSPIRATION



SPRING

Welcome!

The timing of the Spring newsletter is always a contentious thing!

According to Celtic tradition, St Brigid's day heralds the first day of spring. The meteorologists amongst you, meanwhile, will say it is not until March 1st, and still others who follow an astronomical calendar will hold out all the way until March 20th! So, just goes to show you can't please all the people all the time!

At least we're timing it so you have the chance to plan ahead for Lent and Easter, so whatever your viewpoint there'll be something for you within the following pages!

We pray that the following months will bring times of blessing, and opportunities for all ages in your church to share with, and encourage each other on their journeys of faith.

As always please let us know if there are ways we can help support you.

Blessings.

Rachael



Church of Ireland
Board for Ministry with
Children & Families





For many families, Lent has become another thing they have to squeeze into an already overflowing “to-do” list. There are so many resources, activities and ways we are recommended to fill the 40 days after we’ve flipped all the pancakes, that it can sometimes feel a bit overwhelming!

Don’t get me wrong - many of those things are wonderful, and indeed we will be sharing some of the more active Lent resources on the very next page!

But if your family is anything like mine, where even getting to eat a meal together can be a scheduling challenge, we need to strip things back to basics. That is why, for this year, we have put together Re:Lent, a way to recapture the simplicity of Lent.

Re:lent is a simple pack which can be given to families and helps them to put the focus back on the three core elements of Lent:

Re:Lent: Giving up something we like to help us focus on God.

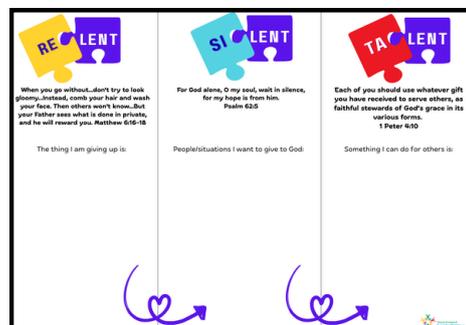
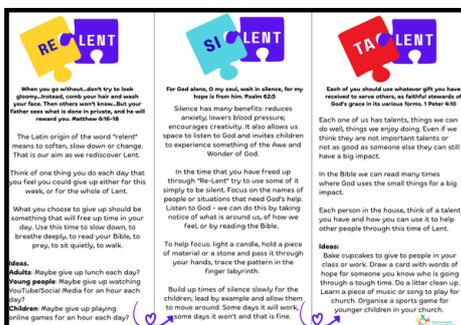
Si:Lent: Making time to listen to God and lay before Him our worries.

Ta:Lent: Using what we have for God’s glory not our own.

There’s one sheet to use. It begins with ideas to help each person in the house choose one thing to give up, which should flow into freeing up time to be silent, listen and pray, which in turn could flow into inspiration for ways in which they might give to others.

There is no pressure to perform, create or show what has been done, it is just between each person and God. Simple! 😊

To download the Re:Lent pack click [HERE](#)



Active

LENT



Church of Ireland
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What if this Lent
you do more than
give stuff up?



join us.

If you are looking for more active ways to help your children and families to engage with Lent then there's lots of choice out there - here's two options to get you started!

Stewardship's 40 Acts resources.

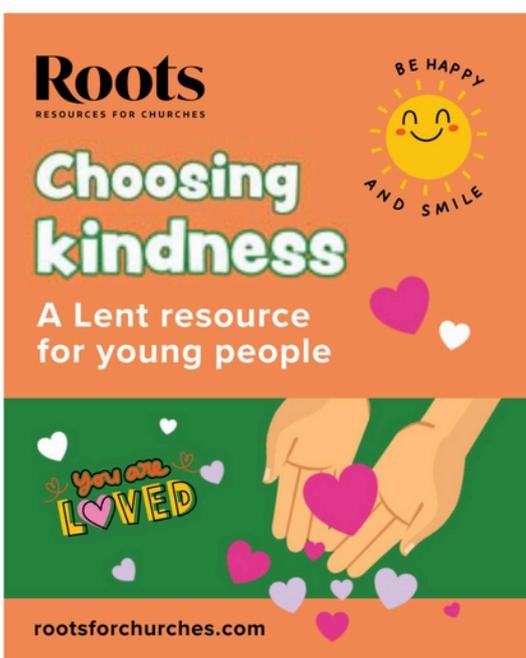
Stewardship is a UK organisation that helps churches and charities to increase their funding base, but they have teamed up with other organisations to run 40 Acts again this year.

40 Acts is a 40-day generosity challenge – building habits, deepening faith and reflecting the heart of Jesus through everyday acts.

Families download the App and each day receive an idea of how to live generously through Lent. It is a simple invitation to give, bless, and grow in generosity – one act at a time.

In addition to the app they have loads of resources including Assemblies, Intergenerational sermon outlines, service elements and worship ideas.

To access all the info click **[HERE](#)**



Roots Choose Kindness.

Those of you who subscribe to Roots will hopefully have picked this up already, but 'Choosing Kindness' is their new resource which can be used in a Sunday Club, school assembly or Intergenerational church service to help young people get ready for Lent. Using Micah 6:1-8 as the Bible reading, the resource helps you to encourage young people to choose intentional, practical actions of kindness, justice, and mercy as they grow as a follower of Jesus.

Not a Children & Youth subscriber? Take a free trial and discover this and a wealth of other resources to support you in your ministry with young people: rootsforchurches.com/freetrial

Easter



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Trueway - Easter Journeys



Click on the image
to access the pack

Brand new, hot off the press is this wonderful free resource from Trueway Kids, an organisation are based in Wales.

This is a 5 part series you can run in the build up to and during Easter. It can be used in Sunday Clubs, Home, Easter Holiday Club, or School.

The curriculum includes:

- Engaging Bible Lesson Guide – simple, clear, interactive teaching points
- Story Pages – pre-coloured and colour-your-own versions
- Accompanying Video – a visual retelling to help children connect with the story (Watch below)
- Worksheets – fun and educational activities to reinforce each lesson
- Bible Memory Verse Activities – interactive ideas to help children memorise Scripture
- Small Group Games – connected to the key point of the session
- Colouring Pages and Crafts – themed activities with templates for hands-on learning

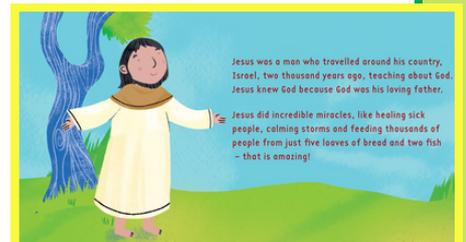
Trueway provides a wealth of fantastic resources at no cost, which is such a blessing for those of us with small churches. However, it's important to remember that creating these resources requires time and skills. Please consider making a donation when you download, to help them continue their valuable ministry.

If you are looking for a video to help tell the Easter story, here's a few options (**click on the images to open the videos**):

Biblifed: This is a personal favourite, animated by Jack Taylor from Northern Ireland, so the narration accent is wonderfully native for a change! The video lasts just over 11 minutes in total, but can be stopped in key places to tell the story from the triumphal entry to Jerusalem right through to the Resurrection.

J.John: This video is a gentle and simple re-telling of the Easter story. Animated pages from the book produced by J.John, it speaks not only the narrative of the story but gives context too. Useful for younger children. The entire video is around 10 minutes long.

King of Kings: If you missed this film at the cinema last year, you can now stream it for free with the Angel Studios app. Told through the eyes of a young boy, The King of Kings follows the story of Jesus from His birth and ministry to His crucifixion and resurrection. *Please note that you require a licence to show this film in your church.* Watch the trailer by clicking the image here →



Easter



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Foundation Stones

For several years, Foundation Stones has been offering fantastic resources, some of which you may recognize, such as their Together@Home materials that proved especially invaluable during the pandemic lockdowns—oh, those memories!

Jess, the creator behind Foundation Stones, crafts beautifully clear and engaging materials that are accessible for both adults and children, making them suitable for various contexts.

What I find particularly wonderful is the emphasis on Biblical literacy, a personal passion of mine in children's ministry. The new resource, "Building Bible Literacy," significantly enhances children's understanding of the Bible and how God's overarching narrative connects.

This straightforward, practical tool is designed to help teachers and leaders share the Bible with assurance. It provides clear, repeatable language that helps establish the context for any Bible passage, whether you're preparing a lesson ahead of time or leading an assembly on short notice.

Each book of the Bible is introduced using consistent phrases, visual symbols and short explanations that build confidence rather than overwhelm. Bonus facts provide just enough extra insight to support the adult leading, without turning preparation into hard work.

This resource pairs perfectly with the Journey Together curriculums (which are based on the Lectionary) and all resources are colour coded to match with the Bible Timeline so that children can clearly see where in God's big story their lesson sits.



Clear, colourful tools to build Bible Literacy



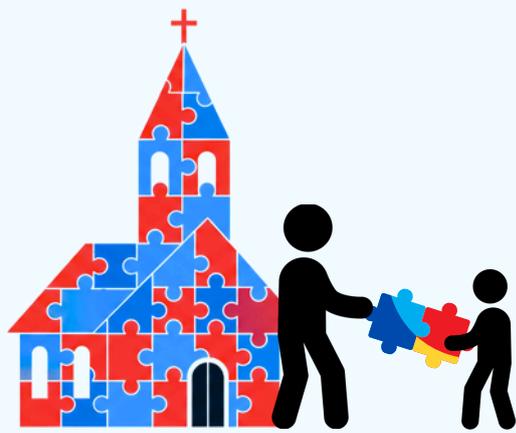
There are so many resources out there it can sometimes be overwhelming, but if you are looking for easy to use lessons, that tie with the Lectionary and give you inspiration for assemblies - or even if you just want something to help you chat with your own children or grandchildren about the Bible, then Foundation Stones is a great place to start.

As we head into Lent and Easter, this could be the perfect time to give it a go, you can see an example of one of the upcoming lessons here. ➡

The curriculums are downloadable, but the Timeline and Building Bible Literacy resource are physical copies.

Thanks to Jess, you can get an **exclusive 10% off when you use the code COF11026** at checkout! [CLICK HERE](#) to access all the resources.





TOGETHER

SERVE

AND GROW



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In 2024, the research paper [“Taking the pulse of ministry amongst Children, Youth and Families”](#) uncovered many interesting and challenging things about Children and Church. One nugget of joy coming from this research, was the desire amongst our children and young people to be involved in church, not just consumers of church activities.

As Dr Sarah Holmes said: *“The most striking aspect arising in the young people’s interviews was their desire to be involved and active in church life. To them, this showed that they were valued and wanted, much more than providing age specific activities (although they did enjoy those also!). They want to be taken seriously and included in decisions, lead events and services and see existing structures of the church accommodating and empowering them.”*

As we know, the church is a body and as such we need to work together. Whilst some jobs in church may have “always been done by...” it is good to find ways to bring our children and young people into these roles. Being involved increases the sense of belonging, it ensures they are known, they develop a greater sense of ownership of the church, and learn to look after each just like a true family.

What ways does your church encourage children and young people to get involved – in the practical jobs, in decision making, and in serving others? One way to help you start this process is to try the “Get Involved” pack which you will find on our website [HERE](#).



George

Wise Words From George

I am here today to tell you all, my dear friends and family about how important volunteer work is. Volunteering is something that is done from the heart. It’s not just a job you do and get paid for, but an element of kindness. This is an opportunity for new challenges, meeting new faces and building relationships with those faces. Volunteering can also help with your personal growth. Neil Armstrong once said: “One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind”. This relates to times like this. One small act of kindness is enough to make someone’s day. Remember these words. Volunteering to do working cleaning up a village is a small step for you but a giant leap for the citizens of the village. There are many types of people. Short, tall, Fat, skinny and stumpy. These many types of people all have many different types of personalities. But all of these people will be grateful for your work, as you will have personal fulfilment and satisfaction.

You will be proud of yourself, whether the job you did was small or big, as long as it brought a smile to your face. This is why “Volunteering Matters” I remember a couple years back when my siblings and I volunteered to help clean the outside of the local church’s hall. We weeded, raked, planted, but most importantly, had fun. I remember the pride I held within me that day. Volunteer work is not just a duty, but a work of art.

One of the many ways of socialising that gets you down on your hands and feet. So will you? Will you volunteer? Be a gem to a crowd. Be a star. Be a volunteer. Thank you!

(George is part of the Diocese of Meath & Kildare)



intergenerate UKI

We have mentioned Intergenerational Ministry several times in this newsletter, so it's a great opportunity to highlight the wonderful organisation that is Intergenerate UK & Ireland! We, at the Board for Ministry with Children and Families, are proud to be partnership members, alongside notable speakers and organisations that promote the many and varied blessings that come from Intergenerational Ministry.

As many of our churches across Ireland have experienced significant changes in congregation size and composition, we are beginning to understand better how Intergenerational Ministry can meet the needs of our evolving society. It does require change, which as we know is never easy, but ultimately, Intergenerational Ministry brings us back to the heart of God's plan for his people.

"One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts."

Psalm 145:4

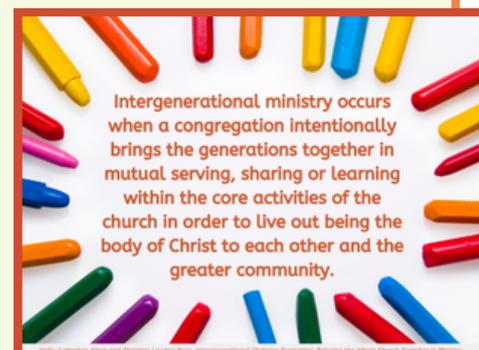
Intergenerational ministry is NOT all about children, nor is it simply having different age groups in one space. Intergenerational ministry really comes down to two things: being intentional and creating genuine interaction between all ages. It's about purposefully helping everyone build real, meaningful relationships, ones that happen regularly and allow each generation to serve, learn and encourage others in their faith.

We live in a society where different age groups are often kept separate from each other, and this has been especially true in the Church over recent generations. While there are certainly moments when it is beneficial to be with our peers, healthy communities – particularly Church communities, which are meant to reflect the functioning of the body and consider themselves a family – should seek to foster connections and mutual development across generations.

If you would like to explore more about Intergenerational Ministry and what it might look like in your context, the Intergenerate [UKI website](#) has a number of recorded webinars that you can access anytime.

Webinar topics include:

Leadership, Preaching and Music in Intergenerational Church;
How to be intergenerational beyond Sunday and most recently
How do Intergenerational small groups work, which you can **watch [HERE](#)**. If your church is already running intergenerational services, or you have intergenerational groups beyond Sunday we would love to hear from you and share your story in our next newsletter, so do please drop me an email: cfmeireld.anglican.org





Church of Ireland ✝
Board for Ministry with
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Small Talk



Focus on the under 5's

Lynn Storey - a wonderfully familiar face to many of us - is Family & Children's Ministry Coordinator for Kiltiernan Parish Church, as well as being one of our fabulous Board members! She has a wealth of knowledge and experience, particularly with the under 5's, so we are delighted that she is sharing some of it with us in our newsletters! This will be a regular feature from now on, so if you have questions to ask about ministry with under 5's, or topics you'd like to see covered we would love to hear from you. Email: cfm@ireland.anglican.org.

Bible Stories in Sensory Play

Sensory play offers children of all ages and stages a hands-on experience where they can be curious, explore, and discover at their own pace. It's multi-sensory, using a variety of materials and textures to stimulate children's senses - sight, touch, smell, taste or hearing.

Some Benefits of Sensory Play

- promotes brain development
- enhances memory, focus and concentration
- sparks curiosity and imagination
- strengthens fine and gross motor skills
- creates a calming effect
- encourages language and communication

I will be sharing ideas and showing examples of how to use sensory play for children to explore and respond to Bible stories. If you are new to sensory play it's a lot of fun to put together and will undoubtedly enrich your ministry with both very young children and not so young, whether neurotypical or neurodivergent. Sensory play is not only engaging but inclusive, allowing everyone the opportunity to participate.

What is a Sensory Tray



- round trays
- small trays
- large trays
- trays with compartments
- tuff trays
- under bed plastic storage box

How to use your sensory tray

- as you read or retell the Bible story add and move objects
- children can retell the story using the tray
- allow children to explore and respond to the story they have heard.

Small Talk

The Easter Story

offers opportunities to create sensory play story scenes of events through Holy Week. Palm Sunday is a good place to start if you are new to sensory Bible stories . Below are some ideas to inspire you.

Some sensory bases

- sand
- coloured rice
- dried lentils
- playdough
- pasta shapes
- coloured pasta
- shredded paper
- pebbles/stones
- fabric



Some story objects

- toy figures
- small world / Playmobil/wooden peg dolls
- stones
- leaves
- wooden blocks
- twigs
- fabric
- flower heads real or fabric
- felt pieces



Palm Sunday Sensory Tray Story

Use one or more sensory materials to fill the tray .

- sand -coloured rice-orange/green
- lentils-artificial grass

Add story objects that link with the story

- smallworldfigures/woodenpegdolls for the crowd and Jesus
- Playmobil figures can be 'dressed' with pieces of felt to make tunics
- toy donkey/horse
- toy trees
- toy wooden block set / jenga blocks to make the gate into Jerusalem
- leaves - real or cut from paper/foam/felt
- pieces of felt/fabric for coats
- coconut shells are great for making the sound of the donkey's hooves, and the children will use them in a variety of ways as they engage with the story in the tray .





The theme is Jesus The Good Shepherd and the key scripture is John 10 v 14-16

1 2 7 7 make them count

NATIONAL MONTH OF PRAYER for Toddler groups June 2026

Pray for your local toddler group, its leaders and all the families it comes into contact with.



For more information, ideas and resources visit the Facebook Group - 1277 www.1277.org.uk/resources

The National Month of Prayer (NMOP) takes place every year during the month of June. It's an opportunity to pray for, celebrate and shine a light on church based Parent and Toddler Groups and the positive impact they have on families who attend as well as those who volunteer. It would be great to be part of the movement with a Month of Prayer for church based Parent and Toddler groups across whole of the island. A launch is being planned for 1st June in Dublin, running concurrently with the launch in the UK.

Each year the group puts together a range of resources that churches, parent and toddler groups, volunteer teams and leaders can use throughout the month of June. These are being put together and will be available soon. The theme for 2026 is 'Jesus the Good Shepherd' and the focussed scripture is John 10 v14-16.

It's not 'just' a parent & toddler group



This year groups are invited to get creative and send a sheep, as we add to the flock of sheep representing Parent and Toddler Groups in Ireland .The gathered flocks will be brought to the launches on June 1st in Dublin. I would love for you to send a sheep which can be knitted, crocheted, a soft toy, any shape, size and colour. It's a great opportunity to involve a knitting group or craft group in church or community. Include the name and location of the group it represents and we encourage you to include your prayers for your toddler group. If you would like to involve your group and get a knitting pattern please get in touch with me by email lynnstorey14@gmail.com. Should you also wish to have your sheep be part of the launch in London I can send you more details.

12 TOP TIPS | FOR SCHOOL READINESS [Click image to read more](#)

'I'm just ...' is a familiar way to start a sentence for parent and toddler leaders. 'I'm just running a weekly toddler group.' 'I'm just putting out some toys.' 'I'm just doing craft.' 'I'm just ...' . We can often underrate and downplay the value of what we do. We may know that our group is worthwhile and that families enjoy it. But that's not the whole story. Beneath the surface of our noisy, messy and chaotic sessions there is all sorts of hidden treasure. Children are learning how to interact with others, developing communication skills, gaining resilience, growing in curiosity and much more. Before we know it, the children in our groups are leaving us and starting to put on a school uniform five mornings a week. We've helped them prepare for that. Our groups give children the opportunity to develop the skills they need to adapt to school life and thrive in their education. So, please, never say 'I'm just ...' again. You're doing more than you think."

Hello God

What happens when we meet with God

We are delighted to join with CMS Ireland once again this year to promote their new resource for ministry with Children.

"Hello God" comes hot on the heels of the fabulous "Switched On" and "Hands Out" resources, which we know many of you have used. As always the pack is full of wonderful lesson plans, resources, videos and crafts to help leaders to simply pick up and run with it!

In order to be first in line when this resource is officially launched scan or click on the QR code in the top corner and register your details. Stay connected to our socials pages for more information in the coming weeks!

PRAYER

God, thank you that you come close. Help me to shine your light. Amen



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equipping the church in mission



Hello God

CMSI Teaching Resource for children and teens

Hello God: what happens when we meet with God

Overview

Sessions and teaching points

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." **John 20:21**

Session 1

Memory verse element: Jesus is sent to us by the Father

Bible references: Mary and the Angel (Luke 1:26-38)

Key teaching points: + "God Comes Close"

* encountering God's presence and saying 'yes' to Him

Session 2

Memory verse element: Jesus enters the world's suffering and brokenness

Bible reference: Jesus in the Wilderness (Luke 4:1-13)

Key teaching points: + "God Finds Us in Hard Places"

* encountering God in tough times; trust and transformation

Session 3

Memory verse element: Jesus' coming provides life, bread, healing

Bible references: The Boy with the Loaves and Fish (John 6:1-14)

Key teaching points: + "God Gives, We Share"

* encountering God's generosity and becoming givers

Session 4

Memory verse element: Now we are sent—transformed by our encounter and called to share it

Bible reference: Pentecost – the Spirit comes (Acts 2)

Key teaching points: + "God Sends Us Out"

* from encounter to mission: after meeting God and being changed, we are sent to love and serve others

Hello God

Key teaching point + God comes close

* encountering God's presence and saying "yes" to Him

Session 1
Yellow

The Hello God material can be used in whatever order or format works best for you. However, the following suggested outline may prove helpful.

You will need: torch, scissors, tape/glue, workbook p 162 and decorating materials/coloured pencils



Way in : you will need a torch

Light surprise: dim the lights and open a lantern or switch on a torch. Say, "When God comes close, it feels like light coming into the dark"



Read/watch Mary and the Angel

Bible passage Appendix 1

Links to two retellings of the story are on PPT slides 2 and 3. **Be careful of adverts - please ensure you check the links before the session.** (PPT slide 2 Saddleback kids 1min 59; PPT slide 3 Minno 3mins 52)



Discuss

- How do you think Mary felt when the angel came? *Explore ideas of awe, wonder and fear*
- What do you think it's like when God comes close to us today? *Explore how we can get to know God through other people as well as reading the Bible and prayer.* Encourage the children to think about people they know who love them and help them learn about God.

Introduce video series – we can get to know God through people in other places who share their lives with us. The 4 videos take 4 different stories that help us get to know God better.



Video 1 K's story is one of hope in the face of difficulties. God came close in the form of Christian brothers and sisters who cared for him. He was given hope when he was left on the margins.



Return to the initial idea that when God comes close it feels like light coming into the dark. Explore John 8:12 (Jesus describes himself as the light of the world)



Craft : Paper lanterns

You will need scissors, tape/glue, workbook pages 162 and decorating materials/coloured pencils
Use PPT slide 4 and workbook pages 162 to make paper lanterns. Then glue simple shapes on (star, hearts etc) to remind them that "Jesus is the Light".



Explore Matthew 5: 14-16 together (Jesus tells his followers they are the light of the world, helping people see God)



Game (PPT slide 5)

Angel says (Simon says adaptation) draw out the importance of listening and then responding.



Introduce memory verse

(PPT slide 6)
John 20:21 "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." – say it together. We will return to this each session with the aim that the children will know it by the end of the teaching resource.



Discuss how we can share God's light with other people / what small 'yes' could the children say to God today?



Prayer (PPT slide 7)

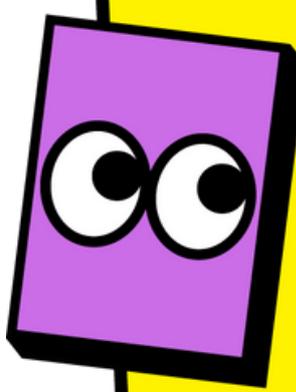
"God, thank you that you come close. Help me to shine your light. Amen."



Plenary

Children hold up their lanterns and whisper one thing they want to say "yes" to (eg kindness, sharing, helping)

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WORLD BOOK DAY®

March 5th



The Selfish Giant

If you watch any of the baking or cooking shows on TV you will inevitably

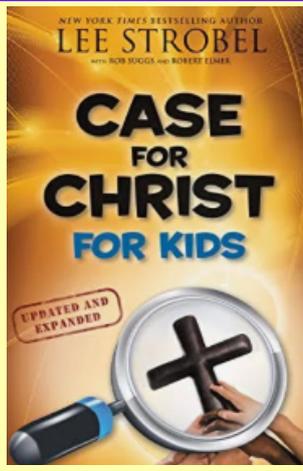
hear someone say “the classics are classic for good reason”. The same most definitely is true of stories, and I was recently reminded of this beautiful classic, “The Selfish Giant” by Ireland’s own Oscar Wilde. For those who are unfamiliar with it, the story centres around a giant who bans children from his beautiful garden, causing it to fall into perpetual winter. After realising his mistake, he welcomes them back, bringing spring and joy. A final act of love for a small boy brings redemption. There is such beauty and spiritual depth to this story it invites children to wander and wonder around it with their heart, mind and soul as they read or listen. The challenge for us adults is to not explain everything, but allow our children the freedom to explore its meaning for themselves.

Book Reviews Wanted!

We would love to include a regular book review page in our Newsletters, so if you have read a book that you want to recommend (ideally connected with Children’s ministry) or if you have a young person who would like to write a brief review of a book they’ve enjoyed (ideally with a Christian theme) Please send them into us by emailing: cfm@ireland.anglican.org. Max 100 words.

The Case for Christ for Kids

During the course of the coming months, many leaders will be asking children what Easter is all about. And, as we all know, when it comes to church, the best answer is always Jesus! In this case it is of course true. We tell the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection each year in many varied ways.



But I wonder if we were to ask our children (or indeed the adults in church) **WHY do we believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus**, what might be the answers? In a world so full of strong opinions, confused beliefs and persuasive voices, it is so important that we help our children to explore the “why” of faith just as much as the what.

Lee Strobel originally set out as an investigative journalist to disprove the resurrection and ended up

being so convinced by the evidence, that he became a Christian!

He wrote “The case for Christ” for adults, but this version was adapted to help children to explore the evidence for themselves. Children are encouraged to ask tough questions and consider the options. These are vital skills for our children to build so that they grow in a faith that has a firm foundation.

This book works well for ages 7+ and there is a free accompanying curriculum you can use too – we’ve popped a copy on our website for you [HERE](#).

I know it’s not new, it’s now about 20 years old – but just like the Selfish Giant, it retains value. A more recent option, although focused more broadly on issues of faith, not just on Jesus, is [Cold Case Christianity](#). This was created by a real detective. The book comes with [accompanying website](#) and resources to use in a club setting. Both options are a way for us all to remember that asking questions is not something to be scared of – God’s got all the answers we need!

CONNECT WITH US



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FEEL FREE TO CONTACT

✉ cfm@ireland.anglican.org

🌐 cfm.ireland.anglican.org

📍 Church of Ireland House, Church
Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6, D06
CF67