

Back to School

—→ with God ←—



An Overview of Resources

Back to School with God Sunday: the vision

Back to School with God resources are provided for you to hold a special Sunday all-age service to mark the start of a new school year, on a date that suits you.

We want to facilitate all ages in the church family coming together to worship, celebrate a new school year, hear from God, and pray for children, young people and local schools.

The vision of Back to School with God is to:

- strengthen children, young people and school staff with the knowledge that they go back to school *with God*
- demonstrate that the church family values them, cares and prays for them
- encourage Christians to live out their faith in the school context
- raise awareness of the need to pray for local schools. (If you haven't already registered your commitment to pray for local schools we would invite you to consider doing so. There is space on the registration form to enter the names of schools. If you register schools for prayer, you will receive a welcome email from Pray for Schools at a future date.)

We would encourage you to involve children and young people in the service wherever possible.

You may also wish to invite representatives from local schools to your service.

What resources are provided?

All resources are free to download after initial registration. A link is sent (please retain this link for future access!).

Our core resource is the **BSG23 All-age Service**. Material is provided for a service of approximately 1 hour. Praise items are suggested but feel free to adapt the service to your own context. The service is provided in both pdf format and as a Word document so you can edit it as desired.

The **All-age service** explores our chosen Bible passage of Joshua 1:1-9. Moses has died and Joshua is being commissioned by God to step out in faith, journeying to the Promised Land. God tells him to be strong and brave – not in himself – but in God. This is a message for everyone! The 2023 theme therefore is **Be Strong and Brave**. This key message is reinforced throughout and we recommend teaching Joshua 1:9 as a memory verse that will stay with children and young people for life.

The service ends with a time of prayer for children, young people and local schools.

The following resources support the All-age Service:

- **BSG23 All-age Service PPT Slides.** A set of PowerPoint slides to accompany the service, which includes the Bible reading.
- **BSG23 Bible Passage.** The Bible translation we have chosen is the CEV, which includes the words 'Be strong and brave'. A print-ready version is provided.
- **BSG23 Bible Study.** New for 2023! Following feedback from last year we have included questions for a youth group or adult Bible Study.
- **BSG23 Children's Prayer Activities and Crafts.** The all-age service is interactive and child-friendly, however some churches may prefer to use the interactive Bible teaching at the start of the All-age Service as a 'children's talk' and then take children out to Sunday Club or Kids' Church. We suggest further prayer and craft ideas for this purpose. **BSG23 School Scenarios** and **BSG23 Medallion Template** are provided as accompanying resources.
- **BSG23 Memory Verse Postcards.** Postcards have Joshua 1:9 on one side and are blank on the reverse to enable people to write a message of support or prayer for a young person or someone who works in a school. These can be printed off by your own church, or ordered for SU Scotland or SU Northern Ireland. See below under 'Before the service' for details.
- **BSG23 Prayers for Schools.** A copy of the prayer featured at the end of the **All-age Service**, for emailing or printing out for each person taking part.
- **BSG23 Video Testimony.** A pre-recorded testimony from a young person of how they were able to be strong and brave in the school context.

BEFORE your service

- If you are not the church leader, speak to the minister, leader or elders to seek permission to hold a *Back to School with God* service.
- Decide when you want to hold it. The service can be held on any Sunday around the start of a new school year, which will vary according to where you live. For the UK this will be any time from mid-August to mid-September.
- Decide on the length of service and select what you want to include. Approximate timings are given for each section.
- Edit **BSG23 All-age Service Word Version** and **BSG23 PPT Slides**. Send the script and updated slide set to whoever operates the tech.
- Identify children, young people and adults willing to take part. **BSG23 Bible Passage** and **BSG23 Prayers for Schools** can be emailed ahead of the service. The Bible version used in our service is the CEV. There is also an opportunity to invite someone to share a testimony.
- Order resources you need in plenty of time. **BSG23 Memory Verse Postcards** are suggested for your congregation to write a message of encouragement or a prayer for a pupil or school staff member. These can be handed out at the end of the service, or people in your congregation may know of or live near teachers or could deliver cards personally to a small school. The postcards can be printed onto card or sent to a local printer. We also have a supply available to collect from

SU offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland or we can post out on request for a small donation. E: Karen.Prenty@suscotland.org.uk in plenty of time for delivery.

We also suggest presenting young people and school staff with **The Little Book of Help** produced by Lifewords UK. Order these from the [Lifewords](https://www.lifewords.org.uk/) website.

- Check any videos are able to be streamed live from YouTube. If you are using videos from YouTube for public use, you need to be aware of your church's copyright policy.
- If you are planning to take photographs or video of under 16s, make sure you have permission from parents to do so – particularly if you plan to share on social media.
- On special Sundays many churches take the opportunity to uplift an offering. You may wish to consider doing this for a local project, or your own youth work.

You might also like to consider supporting the following organisations who have been involved in writing Back to School with God resources, support pupils and staff, and encourage schools' prayer.

- [Scripture Union Scotland](#) (specify Pray for Schools)
- [Scripture Union Northern Ireland](#)
- [Pray for Schools](#) (England & Wales)
- [CVE Scotland](#) (Christian Values in Education Scotland)

AFTER your Service

Feedback: We appreciate you using our resources!. If you have any feedback on the resources, want to make comments or share photos, please do pass these on: email Elizabeth.McDowall@suscotland.org.uk. We normally contact participants in the autumn to ask for general feedback and things we could improve on.

Here are some suggestions for building on your **Back to School with God** service.

Bless pupils and teachers: If your church is sending **Memory verse postcards** to a school and has the resources to do so, you may wish to 'Bless the school' by organising some tasty treats for staff to express the love and support of your church family.

Church prayer buddies: Parents or Sunday Club leaders (with the permission of parents/guardians) could help children make a card with their photo, age, school year, and hobbies. These could be given to church members willing to pray for individuals.

Praying for schools: [Pray for Schools](#) provide 10 short prayers for schools. [Pray for Schools Scotland](#) has an A5 flyer on how to pray and what to pray for. Mention schools regularly in corporate prayer, upholding teachers and pupils you know. You could encourage individuals to pray for schools they walk or drive past or live beside. Please encourage individuals, or your church, to register their prayers at [prayforschoolsscotland](https://prayforschoolsscotland.org.uk/) (if in Scotland) or prayforschools.org (rest of UK).

Serving Schools: Does someone in your church have the skills and time to bless a school by serving as a volunteer helper or by leading a Scripture Union Group? Could you meet practical needs, such as gifting Bibles, or even spare underwear? Offering support to a school will be a blessing and strengthen your church's relationship with the school. For ideas see [Serve your Local School](#) (Scotland) or [CVE-Scotland](#) (for chaplains). In England, check out [Reality Youth Project](#) or [Christian Values in Education](#).