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Why Church?

Main idea

One reason people are part of a church is to learn about Jesus.

Questions answered

by this program

- Why do people go to church?
- What's it like in church?

Bible Base

Luke 4:14-22

For the leader

This session and the next seek to de-mystify the Church through looking at its function and role. We want children to come away thinking that church is something they could easily be part of. 'Church' can be both the people and the buildings in the same way as 'school' can.

Jesus would have gone to his local synagogue (or meeting place) as a boy. There were no paid ministers, but the synagogue authorities would invite people to read and explain the Scriptures.

Open the pack

WHAT HAPPENS INSIDE?

Why? To expose some of the wrong ideas children may have about church.

Divide the children and leaders into three groups:

- Group 1 – those who never go to church
- Group 2 – those who go to church sometimes
- Group 3 – those who go to church nearly every week.

(Make sure the children are not made to feel good or bad for belonging to any particular group.)

Invite each group in turn to stand out the front and answer questions like these:

1. What do you wish you knew about church? What do you think happens there?
2. What do you find strange about church? What do you like best?
3. What is church for? What are your favourite things about church?

SUNDAYS

Why? To introduce church going as one of the ways some ordinary people (like you) choose to spend Sunday.

Pose the question:
What do you usually do on Sundays?

Invite children to play charades to show what they do. Briefly act out your church experience.

Dig in

Comment: 'Church' is done differently in different places. In Bible times, the village synagogue or meeting place was a bit like church. The Bible tells what happened there one day.

WHEN JESUS WENT TO CHURCH

Why? For the children to discover that surprising things can happen in church.

Needed: *A least two Bibles*

Direct people to move into position as if they were in the meeting place, with boys on one side of the room and girls on the other. Appoint two excellent readers to be the narrator and Jesus who stand out the front and read Luke 4:14-22, 28-30.

> ***Pose the question:***
> *What surprising thing happened while the Bible was being read in that 'church'?* (Jesus told them he was the one that the Bible was talking about – the one God would send to start to put things right.)

Chew on it

Needed: *A cardboard sign with 'WOW on one side and 'Church' on the other.*

Show the 'WOW!' Card. **Comment:** That was a real 'Wow!' moment for everyone in church that day. Sometimes when we learn about Jesus or God as we can in church, we have 'Wow!' moments when we realise something amazing that we'd never thought of before.

Share a 'Wow' moment of your own from a church-based experience.

'WOW!' MOMENTS

Why? To encourage children to expect God to be there and make himself known to them. To allow those who have experienced that in church to share.

> ***Pose the question:***
> *What have you heard about Jesus or about God that has made you think 'Wow, I didn't know that before'?*

Explain that we can miss those moments if we're not looking for them. Encourage them to think about the *meaning for them*, not just facts about God. You might pray that you will all experience such times.

HAS GOD BEEN THERE?

Why? To encourage children to expect God to be there and make himself known to them. To allow those who have experienced that in church to share.

> ***Pose the questions:***
> *Have you ever been in church and known God was there even though you couldn't see him? What about another place? How did you know?*

Close the pack

Comment: The people in the Bible reading had a 'Wow' time as they listened to Jesus that day in their 'church'. We can find out about Jesus in lots of places today like Religious Education in schools, SUPA club, Sunday School and church. But the church is where people who really know Jesus get together. That's a good place to go to hear the Bible read and explained.

(You might challenge older children to read their Bible during the week expecting God to give them 'Wow!' moments.)

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The Church - Jesus in

Main idea

The church exists to reach out to the community with God's love.

Questions answered

by this program

- What else do church people do except sing and read the Bible?
- Why are there churches?

Bible Base

Acts 4:32-35 and Acts 6:1-7

For the leader

Two facts characterised the life of the first Christian community. Firstly, despite its size it had a common mind and purpose: it was united in its devotion to the Lord. Secondly, property was for the use of the community as a whole. These two characteristics broadly correspond to the two great commandments of loving God and loving others.

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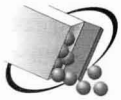

Open the pack

SHARING ACTIVITY

Why? To experience unfairness in sharing resources.

Needed: *Plates and biscuits (See below)*

Form groups of 6 – 8. Seat each group in a circle around a plate with one special chocolate biscuit, two cream biscuits and three dry biscuits. Tell each group that this is the food for their group today and that they can help themselves.

> ***Debrief***:
> *What did you have to eat?*
> *Were you happy about that?*
> *What would you have wanted if you had the choice?*

Comment: The world is not fair. God hates unfairness and he's given his church the job of doing something about it.

NOBODY MISSING OUT

Why? To show how things can be held in common and divided up so no one misses out.

Needed: *A bag of sweets with enough for everyone.*

Seat everyone in a circle and hand out the sweets, several to some people and none to others.

> ***Pose the questions:***
> *Is this fair? How could we make it fair?*
> *Have everyone with sweets put them in the centre and each person take just one.*

If you are running a SUPA Club or other non-church based group...

... think about how you can help the kids in your group make connections with a local church. Would they be welcome at a Sunday school social activity? Could you arrange a joint social activity like the JAFFA Do on page 6? What about a visit to one or more local churches or the chance to question kids and adults who attend?

Our neighbourhood

Dig in

SHARING FAIRLY

Why? To discover the biblical model of sharing.

Pose the question:
What's the best way for everyone in the world to have enough?

In small groups discuss the question and arrive at a group answer then read Acts 4:32-35 to discover how people made sure everyone had enough when the church first began.

JUST WHAT WE NEED

Why? To discover the biblical model of sharing

Explain that when the church first started they had a good way of making sure no one missed out on what they needed. Ask everyone to listen for how they did it as you read Acts 4:32-35.

Chew on it

Needed: *Examples of locally operating welfare programs*

Comment: Making things fair is God's plan for the church. Churches today have welfare programs for those who don't have enough.

Ask children if they know of local examples of the church caring for the needy. Examples might include Christmas toy appeal, hostels for the homeless, Meals on Wheels, and retirement homes.

PREACHING AND CARING

Why? To explore the place of caring for the needy amongst the other roles of the church.

Comment: As the church grew it became harder to divide things up fairly. The leaders were spending more and more time handing out food when there were other important things to do as well.

Divide the children into small groups and challenge them to find out how the church overcame the problem by reading Acts 6:1-7.

Pose the question:
From this passage, what important things should churches do?
(Care for the poor and spread the message about Jesus.)

Note that the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, Wesley Mission, Anglicare, and other similar organizations are church based and are the result of many churches of the one denomination joining together to do things they couldn't do as well as individual local churches. World Vision, Compassion, and City Missions are also Christian organizations although not linked to any particular church.

SPECIAL GUEST

Why? To hear from someone from a local church and be able to question them.

Invite along a member of a local church to tell how their church meets needs among its members and in their community.

Allow children to ask questions.

Close the pack

The church is God's representative in its neighbourhood.
The Bible tells Christians to love God and love others.

Pose the questions:
How does the church show its love for God? (Worship and obedience)
How does the church show its love for others? (Caring for them)