



Christmas is coming! Plans are already in place for Christmas celebrations and the chance to welcome new and occasional visitors. What a joy it is to share the joy that God became flesh and was born in a humble stable!

Top Tip Don't forget to invite your visitors to come and see you again. It's not always possible to speak to them all individually, but a team of church members can distribute a Christmas card or a flyer containing details of other events. Decide which of your future events are likely to be of most interest to your Christmas congregation and make your invitation look attractive. You can include both regular events and special 'one-offs', not forgetting to include a contact phone number.

Grace Children's Workers The Grace Workers are delighted to see lots of new families coming along to our various toddler groups and Messy Church events. God has blessed us with some really worthwhile and spiritually significant conversations.

Tanita's half term puppet club was a great success and a new group has started to meet regularly on Fridays.

Hannah's new toddler group continues to thrive and she has started a parenting course

Jane is planning to take primary pupils on a 'Journey to the Centre of the Christmas Pudding', introducing children to God through the Christmas story.

Rachel is planning to encourage the spirit of 'giving' by providing a variety of really useful Christmas presents for children to make and give to their families.



Tea-towel bouquet

Deadline for requesting a shared Grace Worker Your church can join the Grace Project at any time, but if you'd like a 'shared worker', please talk to us by 1st March 2015; confirm by 17th March 2015 (St David's/Patrick's Days). This gives time to advertise for the best workers possible and prayerfully prepare. New workers hit the ground running! It's a powerful partnership for your church members, with local knowledge, to minister alongside a professional expert with Grace Managerial support.

Prayer Requests Please thank God for contact with so many new families and the successful launch of our Lectionary Puppet Scripts. Please pray for continuing contact with Christmas visitors to our churches.

Thank you for praying for the next generation!

Tanita, Hannah, Jane and Rachel

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Puppet Scripts to Introduce Themes: Lectionary Readings Jan/Feb 2015

For All Age Services, Children's Groups and Time Together before Junior Church

Bible readings and themes compatible with Roots



CHARACTERS *(Only two puppets on stage at any time)*

Ben – A 10 year old boy who loves to play

Melanie – Ben's mother

Dixie the dog - A unisex, lovable rogue who can get away with being naughty; only speaks when alone

Tips: Practise a funny, **woofy voice** for Dixie the Dog. Use a puppet stand with a curtain or a table covered with a cloth. Check that it is safe. Props can be placed on a table or a tall flower stand next to the curtain.

Props and visual aids are helpful for children. If not available, be creative and help them to use their imagination.

Use safety pins to attach the script to the back of the curtain. The larger the text-size the better.

The puppets need to perform high enough for everyone to see - encourage people to move if necessary.

For suggestions re. buying puppets and puppet stands, please visit our website www.graceproject.org.uk

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4th January 2015

Matthew 2:1-12

Following the Star

Worth the Journey

Arriving back from visiting relatives, Ben says he's looking forward to seeing his church friends again. But on Sunday morning he just wants to stay in bed. Mum encourages him to make the effort. It was worth the effort of getting out of bed to go to church because Ben's prayer was chosen to read to everyone.

Theme: Shining a light to guide others to Jesus.

Humour: On Saturday Ben looks forward to seeing friends in church, but in the morning wants to stay in bed
Lots of comical yawning
The alarm makes him jump
Mum has to nag him through his morning routine before he gets to church

Props: Alarm clock or mobile with alarm function
Sheet or pillow case

Signs: 'after a long journey'; 'next morning'; 'after church'

Introduction

Who finds it difficult to get up in the morning? (Sympathise)

Was there a day that you were so looking forward to that getting up was no problem? What were you looking forward to doing? Tell me after the sketch why Ben and his Mum were looking forward to going to church.

The Puppet Sketch

After the Puppet Sketch

Why was it worth going on the long journey?

Why was Ben looking forward to going to church?

Why does Mel like going to church?

Would Ben have got up and ready to go without his mother's help?

Did Ben think it was worth trusting his mother's advice once he'd been to church?

Today's Bible story is about some travellers who went on a long journey and trusted a star to lead them to Jesus. Imagine their joy when they saw the Son of God with their very own eyes!

The Bible Story

(Use Ben's prayer later on in the service.)

Dixie (<i>offstage</i>)	Woof, woof, woof!
Ben	(<i>waking up</i>) Shhh, Dixie! Are we nearly home yet? (<i>yawns</i>)
Mel	Yes, and stop yawning – it’s catching (<i>both yawn</i>) Even late at night, that dog always wakes up just as we turn the corner to our house.
Ben	Long journeys are so boring!
Mel	Was it worth the car journey to go and see Grandma and Grandad?
Ben	Yeah ...and cousins Joe and Jenny. But I like our church better. I know everyone. You can have a laugh with friends you know well.
Mel	You’ll see your church friends tomorrow. And maybe name of group leader will choose your prayer to read aloud? If you wake up in time.
Ben	I’ll get up! I need to show Chris my new Christmas present . (<i>yawns</i>)
Mel	(<i>smiling</i>) Then we’d better hurry and get you to bed – sleepy head!
next morning <i>Ben is fast asleep under a sheet. An alarm clock rings making Ben jump, comically.</i>	
Ben	No! It’s not morning yet! (<i>yawns and goes back to sleep</i>)
Mel	Time to get up!
Ben	No!
Mel	What happened to ‘I’ll get up, don’t worry!’
Ben	I didn’t say that.
Mel	Oh yes you did ..and you wanted to see Chris?
Ben	Oh no I didn’t! (<i>Mel pulls the sheet off Ben</i>) Now I’m cold!
Mel	Get up then! You won’t be sorry. Church is special. You come home knowing that God loves you. In parts of Africa, people love going to church so much they’ll walk for two hours to get there.
Ben	This isn’t Africa. (<i>groans really loudly, then gets up, yawning</i>)
Mel	Don’t forget to comb your hair.
Ben	No, Mum!
Mel	Don’t forget to brush your teeth.
Ben	Oh, Mum! Do I have to? ...All right then...
Mel	Now we’re running late! Put your shoes on quickly.
Ben	(<i>sighing</i>) Yes Mum!
after church	
Mel	Was it worth getting up to go to church?
Ben	Well ...yes!
Mel	What did you do in Junior Church with name of group leader ?
Ben	(<i>excitedly</i>) (S)he chose my prayer to read out to the whole group!
Mel	Brilliant! What did your prayer say?
Ben	‘Dear God, I want to be a shining star showing my friends the way to see Jesus. Amen.’ Then we all shouted Amen really loud. You showed me how to get to church when I was tired, didn’t you Mum?
Mel	Yes, and I’m glad you came!

11th January 2015

Mark 1:4-11

God's messenger, John, Baptises Many

Cleansing Water

Ben has trouble getting out of bed on Sunday morning, again. He doesn't want to bath either! Mum explains about baptism **according to the traditions of your church.**

Theme: Turning away from sin to follow God.

Humour: It's hard to get up in the morning
 Spilt water goes everywhere
 Ben doesn't like baths

Props: Alarm clock or mobile with alarm function
 Sheet or pillow case
 Beaker of water (be careful not to wet the puppets)
 Towel & container on floor for the water to spill into

Introduction

Why is it that some children hate getting washed?
Why do we need to wash? (To be clean.)

The Puppet Sketch

After the Puppet Sketch

Follow up with more details about baptism at your church, describing some of the symbolism.

Listen to the Bible reading about baptisms in the Bible and how Jesus himself came to his cousin John for Baptism.

The Bible Story

Ben	<i>(jumping up)</i> Oh! <i>(lying down again)</i> Urrrrrrr! <i>(snoring)</i> Zzzzzzzzz!
Dixie <i>(enters)</i>	<i>(loudly)</i> Woof, woof, woof.
Ben	Quiet Dixie. It's only the alarm.
Dixie	<i>(quietly)</i> Woof
Ben	Oh, all right, I'll get up and play with you. <i>(coughs)</i> I'm really thirsty. Where's my water? <i>(reaches out, water is spilt off-stage)</i>
Dixie	<i>(shocked and shaking)</i> Woof, woof, woof <i>(exit)</i>
Ben	<i>(sitting up)</i> Sorry, Dixie! <i>(shouting)</i> Mum, I'm all wet!
Mel <i>(off-stage)</i>	You'll be even wetter in a minute – it's bath time!
Ben	Not just me. My sheets are wet and Dixie ran away.
Mel <i>(enters)</i>	What happened?
Ben	I knocked my water over. I'm sorry, it was an accident.
Mel	Good job it was only water. The sheets can be washed and changed. You need a bath today anyway.
Ben	Oh Mum, do I have to?
Mel	Sometimes I think you're allergic to water, Ben. You're not going to dissolve, you know! Yes you do need a bath!
Ben	<i>(groaning)</i> But I want to play with Dixie!
Mel	Later, Ben. Bath first. I'll go and run the water. <i>(exit)</i>
Ben	The Tudors only bathed once a year. I only had one only last week!
Mel	Don't forget to wash behind your ears!
Ben	No Mum. <i>(quietly)</i> Not even dirty! <i>(Wipes finger behind ear and looks at it)</i> Where did all that dirt come from?
Mel <i>(enters)</i>	Your bath is ready.
Ben	I'm not dirty!
Mel	That Pinocchio nose of yours is growing again <i>(both laugh)</i> You would be surprised to see what's sitting on your skin, if only you had a microscope. You need to be clean to go to church.
Ben	But (name of minister/group leader) says that you have to be clean on the inside, not on the outside.
Mel	Better still if you're clean on both the outside and the inside.
Ben	I'm <i>(going to be)</i> Baptised <i>(one day)</i> aren't I Mum? How does Baptism make us clean on the inside?
Mel	(Explains briefly the Baptism traditions in your church.) If you want to know more, ask (your preacher) . Now for your bath, Ben!
Ben	O.K., Mum.

18th January 2015

John 1:43-51

Nathanael comes to Jesus

Stop sulking, Dixie!

Mel is too busy to play so gives Dixie a bone to hide. Dixie sulks and hides under a bush in next door's garden. Mel knows Dixie well. She knows that the promise of a walk will tempt the dog to come back home.

Theme: God knows us and calls us to follow him.

Humour: Dixie loves a disgusting old bone
If Mel is too busy for Dixie, Dixie will sulk
Various strategies for calling Dixie back don't work
Dixie abandons resolve to keep hiding on hearing 'walkies!'

Props: Dog's bone or cardboard cut-out (looks chewed)
Dog's lead or thick string
Bush (plant in pot)
The sound of a door banging

Sign: **some time later**

Introduction

Does anyone feel that they receive a warm welcome when they come to church. What makes them feel wanted? Express a desire for church members to continue to be welcoming, especially to visitors/newcomers. Explore the reasons why people want to be part of the church community.

Wonder whether Dixie feels wanted in today's sketch...

The Puppet Sketch

After the Puppet Sketch

State that God always has time for us and never leaves us, but it's quite understandable that Mel hasn't got time to play with Dixie all the time. How does Mel demonstrate that she has a close relationship with Dixie? (Various answers, including knowing Dixie loves walks.)

God knows each one of us, our likes and dislikes in an amazing way.

Today we shall hear about someone who was reluctant to go and see Jesus, but then he was amazed that Jesus knew all about him.

The Bible Story

Mel	I'm sorry, Dixie, I haven't got time to play with you right now. Why don't you play with your bone? <i>(Dixie goes to bone & slobbers)</i> That's disgusting, Dixie. Take it to the bottom of the garden. I don't want it near the house!
Dixie	Woof, woof.
Mel	<i>(sighing)</i> Let me help you <i>(throws bone)</i> Ugh! That bone was so wet! Bye Dixie. Let me get on with my work now! <i>(exit, banging door on the way into the house)</i>
Dixie	<i>(Runs then stops)</i> That was a mean trick shutting the door. I don't want to play in the garden. I want Mel to play with me in the nice, warm house. Huh! I'm not letting her play with my bone. I'll hide it under this bush. <i>(Hides it)</i> Woof, woof, woof. Nobody wants to play with me and I'm bored. <i>(looks around)</i> Well, well, well, there's a hole under the fence. Perhaps someone next door will play with me. If not, I'm going to sulk! I'll hide under a bush and never, ever come out! <i>(ducks under fence and hides in half-hidden position)</i>

some time later

Mel <i>(by door)</i>	I wonder where Dixie has gone? <i>(looks around)</i> That's strange! <i>(calls)</i> Dixie! Dixie!
Dixie	<i>(under bush)</i> I'm not coming out! Not ever!
Mel	Dixie! Dixie! It's not like Dixie to stay out so long. I'm really worried!
Dixie	She can call and call and call. I'm staying here!
Mel	Stop sulking, Dixie! I'll leave the door open and put on the lights.
Dixie	Silly, Mel, the house will get cold!
Mel	Let's put on Dixie's favourite music. <i>(Play some comical music)</i>
Dixie	I'm not coming!
Mel	<i>(thinking)</i> What does Dixie really love to do? Apart from eating!
Dixie	I'm not coming out. I'd rather starve to death!
Mel	Walkies!
Dixie	<i>(to audience)</i> Coming, Mel.
Mel	I knew you'd come out for a walk. Shall we go to the park together?
Dixie	<i>(excitedly)</i> Woof, woof!
Mel	I'll take that as a 'yes'. But stay close to me. No more sulking and no more games of 'hide and seek'. Follow me.
Dixie	<i>(happily)</i> woof, woof, woof!

25th January 2015

Mark 1:14-20

Calling the Fishermen

Fishing for Gold

Ben enjoys the Pirate Park at an amusement park and wants to fish for gold on the Wild West section. He collects several gold nuggets and exchanges them for a medal. Ben would like to invite his friend Joe to come and meet the pirates and cowboys. An amusement park is a lot of fun, but it's more important to come to church and invite your friends to meet Jesus.

Theme: We too can be fishers of people.

Humour: The pirate hat is too big for Dixie.
 Pirate/Wild West jokes
 Ben doesn't want to get wet
 Getting excited about stones and a cheap medal

Props: Pirate hat (covers Dixie's whole head, home-made)
 Stones
 Sieve
 Cardboard medal

Introduction

Has anyone been to (your local amusement park)? What do you like best?

Are there any attractions that get you wet? Do you mind?

If you were offered a free ticket to go there, would you have any hesitation in accepting the invitation?

Ben is at an amusement park with a Pirate Park and gold mines in the Wild West. Let's see how he's getting on...

The Puppet Sketch

After the Puppet Sketch

Why is it better to invite your friends to come to a church event than the amusement park?

What's good about church?

Listen to today's Bible reading and notice the enthusiasm with which four fishermen accept the invitation to follow Jesus.

The Bible Story

Ben	Hey, Dixie. Do you like this pirate hat I made in the Pirate Park?
Dixie	Woof, woof.
Ben	Why don't you wear it? <i>(puts it on Dixie's head)</i>
Dixie	<i>(happily)</i> Woof, woof <i>(jumps, knocking hat over head)</i> Woooooof.
Ben	<i>(laughs)</i> It's too big for you. Run and catch it! <i>(picks up & throws hat, exit Dixie)</i> See you later, Dixie. Have fun playing with that hat!
Mel <i>(entering)</i>	Did you enjoy the Pirate Park?
Ben	Yes I did. Can I tell you the jokes I saw on the wall. <i>(Mel nods)</i> Why couldn't the pirate play cards?
Mel	I don't know. Why couldn't the pirate play cards?
Ben	Because he was always standing on the deck! Why does it take pirates so long to learn the alphabet?
Mel	I don't know. Why does it take pirates so long to learn the alphabet?
Ben	Because they spend years at 'C'! <i>(both laugh)</i>
Mel	You can pan for gold, here in the Wild West river. Shall we try?
Ben	I don't have to get wet do I? Dixie and I hate water.
Mel	Dixie's happy playing with the pirate hat. Just roll up your sleeves.
Ben	Mmm... O.K. Where are the pans for sieving the river water?
Mel	Here you are. <i>(passes sieve to Ben)</i> See how many nuggets you can collect. <i>(Ben dips sieve into the cold water)</i>
Ben	Ahhh! It's cold!!! <i>(excited)</i> I've got one! It's gold, pure gold!
Mel	Probably just a painted stone, but don't let me spoil the fun.
Ben	I'm rich! I can buy a pirate ship, sail the seven seas, steal treasure...
Mel	<i>(disapprovingly)</i> Buy a ranch and be a farmer instead - since we're in the Wild West. Shall I read you the jokes on the wall over there?
Ben	O.K., Mum. I could be here a while getting lots of gold, getting rich.
Mel	Why are so many gold-diggers children?
Ben	I don't know. Why are so many gold diggers children?
Mel	Because it's the only profession open to minors! What are the three rules of finding gold?
Ben	I don't know. What are the three rules of finding gold?
Mel	Mine, mine, mine! I think you've collected enough nuggets to exchange for a cardboard medal from that cowboy over there.
Ben	Yee haw! A priceless cardboard medal. It's fun to meet the cowboys and pirates. Can we come again and invite Joe to meet them too?
Mel	<i>(doubtfully)</i> It's very expensive here. I'd rather you invited Joe to church to meet Jesus. Better to know Jesus than a cowboy or pirate.
Ben	Collecting medals from a cowboy is fun. It doesn't change your life.
Mel	But Jesus does. Better to bring your friends to club to meet Jesus.

1st February 2015 Mark 1:21-28 Jesus teaches with authority/drives out an unclean spirit

Who's the boss?

Mel and Dixie are practicing what they've learnt at dog obedience classes. Dixie just barks for Ben and has to be taken out when a visitor arrives. Ben asks his Mum to teach him how to control Dixie.

Theme: Some people have more authority than others. Dixie is excluded for being too noisy.

Humour: Dixie does the opposite of what Ben says.
Dixie doesn't stop barking
Pun on the word bark

Props: Dog biscuit
Door-bell sound
(optional) Cushion for dog bed

Introduction

Find out who has a dog and how they were trained.
Why is it necessary to train a dog to obey their owner?

The Puppet Sketch

After the Puppet Sketch

Notice that Mel had more authority over Dixie than Ben did. Why was that?
Who are the people that we need to obey? What about God?

How does Jesus demonstrate his authority in today's Bible reading.

The Bible Story

Mel	Dixie, let's practice those tricks we learnt at dog obedience classes. Are you ready? (<i>Dixie nods</i>) Dixie, lie! (<i>Dixie lies down</i>)
Dixie	Woof!
Mel	Dixie, stand. (<i>Dixie stands</i>)
Dixie	Woof!
Mel	Dixie, sit. (<i>Dixie sits</i>)
Dixie	Woof!
Mel	Dixie, heel. (<i>Dixie stands behind Mel's leg</i>) Very good, Dixie. I've got a biscuit for you. Now lie quietly in your bed. I'm expecting an important visitor and I don't want you barking noisily while she's here. (<i>Throws biscuit into bed and exits, Dixie catches, lies down</i>)
Dixie	This obedience training is good for getting treats, but I'd rather play rough with Ben. It's much more exciting!
Ben (enters)	Mum says you're being nice and good today, Dixie? You're so quiet!
Dixie	(<i>loudly</i>) Woof! Woof! Woof! (<i>jumping up</i>) Woof! Woof! Woof!
Ben	What happened to the nice quiet Dixie? Sit, Dixie!
Dixie	(<i>standing shaking head</i>) Wooooof!
Ben	Heel, Dixie! (<i>Dixie lies down</i>)
Dixie	Woof
Ben	Sit Dixie! (<i>Dixie stands up</i>)
Dixie	Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!
Doorbell	(<i>offstage</i>) Ding dong
Dixie	(<i>even louder</i>) Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!
Ben	Bad Dixie! Go in the garden. Mum's got an important visitor coming to see her and needs quiet. You can bark all you like outside. Trees like bark! (<i>both exit</i>)

later

Mel (<i>offstage</i>)	Bye now! Thanks for coming!
Ben	Mum?
Mel (<i>enters</i>)	What is it, Ben?
Ben	Why does Dixie obey you and not me?
Mel	You and Dixie have fun together playing rough and tumble. Dixie thinks of you as a play-mate, not a master to be obeyed.
Ben	What can I do to make Dixie do what I say?
Mel	Well, you could come with me to the obedience classes and...
Ben	...and what, Mum?
Mel	Treats work wonders. Dixie'll do anything for a biscuit! (<i>both laugh</i>)

8th February 2015

Mark 1:29-39

Jesus heals Peter's Mother-in-law

'Achoo!'

Mel and Ben are suffering from colds and go to bed to have a quiet time and a sleep. Dixie is suffering too and goes to bed. Dixie responds to Ben's call by bringing him a bone, but boys prefer sausages for tea!

*Theme: Making space in our lives to pray
Serving others*

Humour: Speaking with bunged up noses
 Ben's reluctance to go to bed
 Funny sneezes and feeling dizzy
 Even a dog can sneeze and feel wobbly
 Sausages spoken in a funny deep voice (e.g. like on Esther Rantzen's 'That's Life')
 Dixie playing with the sausages and eating them

Props: Paper hankies
 String of sausages made from ladies tights stuffed with newspaper and tied at intervals
 Dixie's bone

Introduction

Has anyone had a flu jab? Why don't you want 'flu?

What's it like having 'flu or a really nasty cold? Most of us don't feel like doing anything except resting quietly.

The Puppet Sketch

After the Puppet Sketch

Mel is a really busy lady with a family to look after. Mums have to keep going when there are children in the house. Did you notice what Mel was going to do before she had a sleep?

It can be hard to make time to pray when you're really busy. 'Flu makes you stop and rest. It's good to have a daily quiet time when you make the effort to stop, pray and reflect on God's word.

Today we're going to hear about a time when Jesus took time out to pray and a very special Mum who liked to keep busy cooking food for her family

The Bible Story

Ben	Mum, I think I've got a cold. <i>(blows nose comically)</i>
Mel	Me too <i>(blows nose comically)</i> I thig I gaught your gode.
Ben	I'm going to sneeze... achoo!
Mel	Bless you.
Ben	Achoo! Achoo! Achoo!
Mel	Bless you, bless you, bless you! Aaaaachooooo!
Ben	Bless you! <i>(Both continue to sneeze and blow noses)</i> I'm feeling wobbly.
Mel	You might have 'flu. The best place for you is bed!
Ben	But bed is sooo booooooring!
Mel	Not if you're sleeping off the 'flu – now off you go.
Ben	<i>(reluctantly)</i> Yes Mum. <i>(exits)</i>
Mel	I'm not well myself, but I need to get tea. I'll take the sausages out of the freezer. I'll have a quiet time in bed reading the bible and spending time with God. I need to pray to get better quickly. There's so much to do when you're a Mum. <i>(exits)</i>
Dixie	Woof! I think I caught their cold too. Achoo! Achoo! Achoo! I'm off to bed too. <i>(lies in bed)</i> My lovely bone is here. <i>(chews bone)</i>
Ben <i>(offstage)</i>	Mum! I've woken up now. I'm hungry!
Mel	<i>(Snoring)</i> Zzzzzzz.
Dixie	Ben's hungry – I'll take him my bone. <i>(takes bone offstage)</i>
Ben <i>(offstage)</i>	No! I don't want to eat your old bone. It's all wet and slobbery.
Dixie	My bone isn't half as wet and slobbery as Ben's handkerchief.
Ben	Mum, is it sausages for tea?
Mel	<i>(Snoring)</i> Zzzzzzz.
Dixie	Sausages? Sausages? Sausages? Where are the sausages. <i>(looks)</i> Yippee! Lovely sausages to play with <i>(throws in air, land on head)</i> Let's see if Ben likes my new hat!
Ben <i>(enters)</i>	Naughty Dixie! Go to your bed! <i>(Dixie lies in bed, taking sausages)</i> Give back those sausages. <i>(Tug of war; Ben falls over)</i> Naughty Dixie!
Dixie	Yum, yum, yum. <i>(disappears, eating the sausages)</i>
Ben	Mum, Dixie has eaten the sausages for tea!
Mel	<i>(yawning)</i> You woke me up by shouting, but I feel a bit better after some peaceful prayer time and a sleep. Where are the sausages?
Ben	<i>(pointing)</i> In Dixie's tummy!!! Dinners in the dog.
Mel	<i>(laughing)</i> Good job there are more in the freezer and they'll defrost in the microwave. I hope Dixie's O.K.!
Ben	<i>(looks back stage)</i> The dog looks fine, just a bit of indigestion! <i>(Dixie does some loud, comical burping)</i>
Ben and Mel	Pardon Dixie!!!

15th February 2015

Mark 9:2-9

Transfiguration

Knock, Knock

Ben has learnt some new jokes. Mel explains that knock, knock jokes use words that can change to take on a whole new meaning. They look at photos and notice that people look different in different places. We look and feel different when we feel close to God.

Theme: God's presence changes us

Humour: Knock, knock jokes

Props: Photos in frames (if possible, one taken on a hill or mountain)

Introduction

Ben has got some knock, knock jokes for us. They might be quite corny!
While you're listening, think about why the jokes are funny...

The Puppet Sketch

After the Puppet Sketch

Do people look and seem different when they're close to God?
Has anyone been to a meeting or a residential when God felt very close? How did it affect the group?
What do you think we shall look like when we are in Heaven?

Jesus will dramatically change his appearance in today's bible story.

The Bible Story

Ben	Mum, I've got some new jokes to tell you.
Mel	<i>(groans)</i> Oh no! I hope they're not as corny as the last lot.
Ben	They're good ones! Knock, knock.
Mel	Who's there?
Ben	Ken.
Mel	Ken who?
Ben	Ken I come in?
Mel	<i>(laughs)</i> You can come in anytime, Ken. Are you Ben or Ken?
Ben	Knock, knock.
Mel	Who's there?
Ben	Justin.
Mel	Justin who?
Ben	Justin time for lunch.
Mel	Just in time – yes, I get it.
Ben	Here's another: Knock, knock.
Mel	Who's there?
Ben	Frank.
Mel	Frank who?
Ben	Frank you for being my friend.
Mel	You're welcome!
Ben	Last one: Knock, knock.
Mel	Who's there?
Ben	Police.
Mel	Police who?
Ben	Police (please) may I come in?
Mel	Very good and nice and polite too. <i>(Ben bumps into photos)</i> Careful, Ben you're knocking the photographs over. <i>(Ben points to one)</i>
Ben	We both looked different in this photograph. Look at your messy hair!
Mel	It's very windy at the top of (local hill/mountain) Look at your smiling face. You were excited by the wind. We were both enjoying God's world.
Ben	I remember how powerful the wind was and you said 'It needs a powerful God to make a powerful wind.' When I leant back against the wind it felt like I was leaning on God. It felt wonderful. I look older now.
Mel	Yes, you've changed since then. The way you look, the way you talk. The jokes you tell. Things change over time. New words get invented and some words change their meaning.
Ben	Jokes change words: Ken to can; Justin to just in; Frank to thank and Police to please. That's funny! Jokes are funny because words change.
Mel	It's a funny change that comes by surprise. The surprise makes us laugh.
Ben	I like surprises!

Setting the Scene

There is to be a church open day. Mel and Ben are setting up three prayer stations with things to look at and ideas to help people to pray. The objects and symbols remind them of Jesus' baptism, the temptations in the wilderness and proclaiming the Kingdom. This sketch can be performed from the front of the church with the puppets looking across at the three stations, or staged in three different places:

- (1) by the font (representing Jesus' baptism),
- (2) a quiet area (representing the desert where Jesus was tempted)
- (3) the pulpit (representing Jesus proclaiming the good news).

Set up the scenery before the service. The preacher should explain the symbols used in your church. Be willing to adapt the script for your personal circumstances.

Theme: Washed clean, weight of sin, sharing Good News.

Humour: Getting wet by treading on a blue sheet
Ben thinks he's strong lifting the fake stones that are really quite light
He feels important blowing a party trumpet standing on the pulpit step

Props: Blue sheet
Soap, bowl of water, towel
Pebbles of different sizes
Rocks labelled 'greed', 'selfishness' & 'wanting power' (large newspaper balls fixed with sellotape)
Bibles
Party trumpets
Step ladders, if no raised pulpit is available
Optional: Tray of sand/salt; angels; toy desert animals; Prison bars; Cuff-links;
Any other props, as desired

Introduction to scene 1

Explain that Mel and Ben are setting up three prayer stations to help people think about the start of Jesus' ministry: His baptism, His temptation and telling the Good News.

Draw the congregation's attention to the blue sheet representing water, and the soap for hand-washing

Introduction to scene 2

Draw attention to the tray of sand in a quiet area of the church and the stones representing temptations

Introduction to scene 3

Draw attention to the collection of bibles and party trumpets (these can be given to children as they leave for home)

After the Puppet Sketch

Look at the items after the service to help you reflect on the beginning of Jesus' ministry

The Bible Story

Mel	Have you got the blue sheet spread out, Ben? (<i>Ben walks on sheet</i>)
Ben	Nearly. Does it look like the river where Jesus was baptised?
Mel	Ben! You're treading in the water. You're getting your feet wet!
Ben	Whoops! Sorry! I don't mind pretend water.
Mel	That's all right Ben, just don't do it again.
Ben	Please can you get the bowl of water? I might spill it.
Mel	OK. Can you bring the soap and the towel?
Ben	Do we need a towel? Can't you just dry your hands on the sheet?
Mel	I think that would spoil the display.
Ben	What do you have to do after you've washed your hands.
Mel	Just look at them, like this, (<i>looks at hands</i>) all clean –remembering God has given us special work to do with our clean hands.
Ben	Let me wash my hands too. (<i>washes and looks at them</i>) My hands never seem to stay clean for very long!
Mel	That's why we need to keep washing them regularly!

Scene 2, in a quiet part of the church

Mel	You're getting stronger, Ben – carrying all those rocks! This makes a cool desert scene. Quiet and prayerful. Just the place to think how easy it can be to want to do the wrong thing. Sin can be so tempting.
Ben	One more rock (<i>comically pretends to carry heavy rock</i>) Uh - Heavy!
Mel	We just need to label them 'greed', 'selfishness' & 'wanting power'.
Ben	I want to do it. Where are the signs, Mum?
Mel	Over there. They will help us to think about the bad things we're tempted to do. Let's put out some chairs where people can pray holding the heavy stones that represent the sins we do wrong.
Ben	They're not heavy for me. I'm superman!
Mel	They're heavy enough for those of us who aren't like superman. Without God's help, our greed, selfishness and unkindness hangs on us like a heavy weight.

Scene 3, at the pulpit - Ben is standing tall on the step

Mel	Sadly, John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin was put in prison. Now it's up to Jesus to tell everyone about God. Jesus brings good news and He needs to shout it very loudly.
Ben	I can be loud!
Mel	That's true!
Ben	(<i>blows trumpet</i>) Good news! Good news! God loves you! (<i>trumpet</i>)
Mel	Yep, that's loud!
Ben	There's a lot of Bibles here.
Mel	Yes, that's the best place to discover the word of God.
Ben	(<i>waving Bible</i>) Good news! Good news! (<i>blows trumpet</i>)