



New Grace Workers We are delighted to announce the appointment of two new Grace Workers, Gordon and Melody. Gordon has studied both law and theology. He is currently working as a Youth and Children's Worker in Plymouth and will be serving four churches around Bingham, Nottinghamshire. Melody is the youngest Grace Worker ever appointed, but she's a whizz-kid with a wealth of experience!

Church Enrichment Project An exciting new development for Grace will be the launch of a new project. The pilot scheme(s) will begin in September, subject to a successful interview day on the 28th July. We are looking for part time, salaried Grace Workers and GAP Year Students to run a 'one year mission'. This is a terrific opportunity for anyone willing to offer their time to achieve great things in a short space of time. If you know anyone who might be interested, please direct them to our website for more information. The closing date for applications is 23rd July. We are delighted that churches in Sutton Coldfield and High Wycombe have offered to be the flagship churches to trial this scheme.

Top Tip Now is a good time to *plan ahead* for the new academic year. Find out the term dates and INSET days already known at your local schools. Plan some popular outreach events and invite participants to a Christian activity soon afterwards. A local clown, magician (illusionist) or a circus workshop could prove attractive to the local children. Schools are usually happy to help with publicity!

End the year with a photo! Don't forget to take a group picture before your groups close down for the summer holiday. It's a good souvenir for children to treasure and remember special times you have enjoyed together. Photographs taken outside usually come out better than indoor pictures. Seek appropriate permission from parents. The photos can be used to help publicise the activity next year.



Prayer Requests Please pray for Grace Worker Tanita. Following a car accident at Easter, she's still wearing a brace to help the fractures in her spine to heal. Also, for the right people to apply to join the Church Enrichment Project. We thank God for Jane's ministry during her six years with Grace and pray for a blessed retirement.

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Puppet Scripts to Introduce Themes: Lectionary Readings May/June 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 – playful 10 year old boy

Melanie – Ben's mother

Dixie the dog - unisex, lovable rogue who can get away with being naughty; speaks English 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 scripts to the back of the curtain and highlight each part. Use a large font-size.

For amplification, headset microphones stay in the right place and leave the hands free.

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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5th July 2015

Mark 6.1-13

Rejection and Mission

The Grumpy Guest House

Mel grew up in **Blackpool*** and has taken Dixie onto the beach. Both are covered in sand and need to clean up. They are not welcome at a relative's Grumpy Guest House where no dogs are allowed. They stay elsewhere.

Themes: *It hurts, not to be made welcome, especially by a relative. Shaking the dust from your feet.*

Roots themes explore: *Travelling light; welcome & hospitality; letting go*

Humour: Dixie shakes water all over Mel, then covers her in sand
Mel wobbles and laughs contagiously because she has tickly sand between her toes
The beach shower is cold
There is too much to carry (x2) Dixie runs off after a bone and doesn't help to carry it
Mel's Great Aunt is grumpy and patronising

Props: Sandal, bags
Signs saying: 'Blackpool Beach' and 'Grumpy Guest House'

**Use the name of your nearest, popular sea-side resort*

Introduction

Discover which beaches the congregation like to go to.

What is it like to have sand on your feet? What is the best footwear?

What do you have to do when it's time to leave the beach?

Establish that sandy feet are fine on the beach, but not elsewhere (e.g. in the car)

Washing down your feet could be your last action when leaving the beach.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'The Grumpy Guest House'

After the Puppet Sketch

Enjoy the joke that relatives nearly always seem to say 'haven't you grown' to children they've not seen for a while.

Aunt Ethel couldn't believe that Mel had grown up and now liked dogs. She still thought of her as a little girl.

Mel seemed fond of her Auntie Ethel (despite her grumpiness). How did it feel not to be made welcome?

How did Dixie feel? How would you feel if you were not allowed in somewhere?

Why is it important to make people feel welcome?

In today's Bible reading, Jesus returns to the town where he grew up. He doesn't get the welcome you might have expected!

The Bible Story

Mel	Time to go home, Dixie!
Dixie (enters)	Woof, woof, woof!
Mel	Have you had a nice time on Blackpool beach?
Dixie	Woooof!
Mel	I loved coming here when I was a little girl. I paddled in the water for hours.
Dixie	Woof, woof! (<i>shakes water all over Mel</i>)
Mel	No, Dixie! I don't want a shower from you!
Dixie	Woooof! (<i>jumps up at Mel with sandy paws</i>)
Mel	And I don't want your sandy paws all over my clothes either.
Dixie	(<i>Stands still and pants loudly</i>)
Mel	Just stay there and let me hold you while I shake the sand from my sandals.
Dixie	(<i>Groans while Mel holds on; both wobble as she shakes out the sandal</i>)
Mel	The sand's stuck between my toes. It tickles. (<i>giggles</i>) We need that tap. (<i>points</i>)
Both	(<i>Limp to far side of stage and hold out their feet/paws</i>) AAAAArgH!
Mel	The water is so cold! Oooooo! Oh well, at least we have clean feet.
Dixie	(<i>Looks at paws</i>) Wooooooof!
Mel	Nanny booked us into her Aunt's Guest House. Aunt Ethel is very old now to still be running a Bed and Breakfast. (<i>whispers</i>) She was always a bit grumpy!
Dixie	Woof, woof, woof!
Mel	I'm sure she'll give us a warm welcome. She's known me a long time.
Dixie	Woof, woof!
Mel	Can you help me carry all these bags? Why did we bring so much stuff to the beach? (<i>They both struggle, comically with the bags.</i>)

Grumpy Guest House

(Dialogue is offstage. Dixie is listening and reacts comically)

Dixie	(<i>Looks at sign</i>) Grumpy Guest House! I don't like the name of this hotel.
Mel (offstage)	Auntie Ethel! Do you remember me? It's Mel. I've come to stay.
Ethel (offstage)	Haven't you grown, my Dear. Last time I saw you, you had a little ponytail.
Mel (offstage)	It's good to see you. How are you? I've brought our dog, Dixie
Ethel (offstage)	That's a good joke. You were always scared of dogs when you were little.
Mel (offstage)	Errm... actually Aunt Ethel, I really have brought a dog.
Ethel Dixie & All	Oh no you haven't Oh yes she has (<i>repeat twice</i>)
Mel (offstage)	Didn't Mum tell you that I was bringing a dog? Dixie is lovely!
Ethel (offstage)	(<i>Confused</i>) I can't remember everything you know! You'll have to go elsewhere with your dog.
Dixie	It's all my fault! Mel shouldn't have brought me here. I'm not welcome!
Mel (enters)	Oh Dixie! My mother forgot to tell my Aunt about you! We can't stay here!
Dixie	(<i>Whimpers pathetically</i>)
Mel	Don't worry. There are millions of guest houses here in Blackpool. (<i>thinks</i>) Hmmm... Now where was that hotel my friend recommended? Aha! That was it! I know a hotel where the owner has five dogs!
Dixie	(<i>Nervously</i>) Woof, woof?
Mel	It's OK, they're smaller than you. She keeps bones for dogs to chew & hide.
Dixie	Woof, woof, woof! (<i>runs off excitedly</i>)
Mel	Come back Dixie. I need you to help me carry all these bags! (<i>sighs</i>) Dogs!!!!

Why the Wardrobe?

Mel has made a red cape for her niece and tells the story 'Little Red Riding Hood'. Ben is too old to appreciate the story, but is puzzled why the wolf locked Grandmother in the wardrobe. He is glad she was rescued.

Theme: Rescuing the innocent prisoner before they are put to death by a tyrant.

Roots themes explore: The role of the prophet; power; decision-making and regrets; standing up for what is right

Humour: Ben is too old to appreciate fairy tales
He insists that the wood-cutter is referred to as an 'arborist'
Ben likes the colour but wouldn't be seen dead in a red cape
He throws it over Mel's head
Ben gets carried away with the wolf eating grandmother whole, showing a wide mouth
He demonstrates grandmother hobbling out of the cupboard
Cynicism – how do you expect wolves to behave?

Props: Red clothing
Basket (optional)
Sign saying: 'In the lounge'

Introduction

Bring pictures of a range of objects to show. Decide where each should be kept (e.g. egg or ham in fridge, hamster in a cage, flowers in water, potatoes in the dark so they don't sprout etc.)

Use the phrases 'That would be a good decision.'

In today sketch, Ben is puzzled by a decision made by the big bad wolf.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Why the Wardrobe?'

After the Puppet Sketch

Observe that it was a good job the wolf hadn't eaten Grandma straight away!

We may think of fairy tales as being written for young children and written in the days when wolves really did eat people, sometimes. For us today, the wolf could symbolise a tyrant imprisoning and torturing others.

What is a tyrant? What makes somebody a tyrant?

Think about tyrants who have exploited their people within the congregation's lifetime.

Give some examples: Hitler was opposed by many Christian; Saddam Hussein (Christians still suffer in Iraq).

Discuss how tyrants imprison and put to death those who speak out against the tyrant.

How are they able to do this?

As you listen to the Bible Reading, ask yourself whether King Herod had the power to do as he wished.

Why had he imprisoned John?

The Bible Story

Observe, later in the service, that Herod was under the influence by his wife. He made a bad decision that, unintentionally, led to him killing John the Baptist.

Mel	<i>(To the audience)</i> I've made a red cape for my niece. Stacey's five and going to be Little Red Riding Hood in her school play I love that story! Kind Little Red Riding Hood packed a basket of food for her grandmother and carried it through a dark forest. On the way to Grandma's cottage, she met a wolf and told him where she was going. The wolf ran on ahead, pushed Grandma into a dark wardrobe, put on her clothes and jumped into her bed, waiting for Little Red Riding Hood to come. The wolf didn't look like Grandma so Little Red Riding Hood said, 'But Grandmother, what big ears you have!'
Ben (enters)	<i>(In a funny wolfy voice)</i> All the better to hear you with, my dear!
Mel	Grandmother, what big eyes you have!
Ben	All the better to see you with, my dear!
Mel	Grandmother, what big teeth you have!
Ben	All the better to eat you with, my dear!
Mel	Little Red Riding Hood screamed. <i>(Ben does so comically)</i> The local wood-cutter rushed in with his axe, killed the wolf and let Grandma out of the wardrobe.
Ben	<i>(Sarcastically)</i> An arborist, Mum. We don't have wood-cutters any more.
Mel	OK, Ben, ...an ar-bor-ist lets her out of the wardrobe.
Ben	Hmmph... It's a stupid story
Mel	Not if you're five years old. The wolf represents a tyrant who scares people.
Ben	I never understood why the wolf locked Grandma in the wardrobe.
Mel	Why, what would you have done if you'd been the wolf?
Ben	<i>(Comically)</i> I'd have grabbed quickly and eaten her whole. Gulp! <i>(opens mouth wide)</i>
Mel	That big mouth would scare five year olds. I'm glad you're not in the play.
Ben	I wouldn't want to be! I don't like fairy tales.
Mel	Do you like the cape I made?
Ben	No!
Mel	I've spent a lot of time on it. Can you try it on, so I can see what it looks like?
Ben	No! <i>(a tussle ends up with Ben throwing the cape over Mel)</i> Nice colour!
Mel	Oh Ben, where did you go? It's dark under here. I can't see anything! <i>(both laugh, Mel takes off cape)</i>
Ben	Well! I can't see why the wolf put Grandma in a dark wardrobe. Why the wardrobe? Why didn't he just eat her straight away?
Mel	Think about it, Ben. If the wolf hadn't put Grandmother in the cupboard, she wouldn't have been saved by the wood-cutter...
Ben	Falling out of the cupboard in her flowery nightie like this <i>(demonstrates)</i>
Mel	And the story wouldn't have had a happy ending. <i>(condescendingly)</i> Ahhhhh!
Ben	<i>(even more condescendingly)</i> Ahhhhhh!
Mel	While she was imprisoned in the wardrobe Grandma had the chance of life. She and Little Red Riding Hood were good people, sharing food and friendship. They didn't deserve to die at the hands of the big bad wolf.
Ben	It's what wolves do. That's what cages are for in zoos.
Mel	A hero helped the innocent escape. That doesn't always happen in real life.
Ben	Since when was Little Red Riding Hood 'real life'? Get real, Mum! <i>(both exit)</i>

A Crowded Day Out

Ben has worked hard and chooses a treat for the school holidays. There are coupons in the local paper. Will he choose a day in London, mobbed by pigeons in Trafalgar Square or a day in the country where sheep block the road? Ben didn't mind waiting for the flock of sheep they met last summer.

Theme: Holiday destinations advertised where you can be in a 'crowd' on your 'day off'

Roots themes explore: The way news spreads; showing compassion; the importance of rest

Humour: Dixie struggles with the newspaper which is very large, relative to the puppets
 Going to a farm to see chicks is 'cheap, cheap'; pun on 'chicken'
 Imagining pigeons swarming towards you at Trafalgar Square (they splat you!)
 Recalling the time a flock of sheep blocked the road and Dixie barked loudly at them
 Waiting for the sheep to pass felt like a really long time
 Ben wants to avoid noisy traffic – unless it's an ice cream van

Props: Large newspaper
 Signs saying: 'In the lounge'

Introduction

Find out where people are going/have been for their holidays. Who likes a peaceful place to 'get away from it all'? State that it's good to have a break sometimes, even if it's just a rest staying at home, finishing a bit of DIY or maybe just playing in the back garden with friends!

Compare the best and worst parts of going for a city break or visiting the countryside.

What makes the best sort of holiday? Compare children's to adults' answers for this.

Ben has worked hard all year and is offered a trip as a reward. Let's hear what sort of a break he will choose?

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'A Crowded Day Out'

After the Puppet Sketch

Enjoy hearing experiences of times when members of the congregation have been surrounded by pigeons.

Has anyone been surrounded by sheep? Let them tell you what it was like for them and the sheep.

Any other animals? How did it feel?

What's it like being in a crowd of people? (e.g. at a football stadium or a concert)

Those experiences were probably fun, but in today's Bible reading Jesus and the disciples were trying to have a break and avoid the crowds. Let's hear about it now.

The Bible Story

Dixie brings a large newspaper to Mel. He drops it, gets tangled up in it and exits straight away.

Lots of appropriate barking to enhance the humour.

Mel	<i>(Picking up the paper and shouting offstage)</i> Thank you, Dixie. That was very helpful. <i>(looks at paper)</i> Ah! There are coupons for days out in the school holidays. Ben has worked hard at school this year. He really does deserve a treat. I wonder where he would like to go?
Ben (enters)	You've made a mess of that newspaper, Mum. It's all over the sofa!
Mel	Actually, I'll have you know that was Dixie trying to be helpful! But guess what I spotted! Coupons for days out! I thought I'd let you choose a treat for the holidays for working so hard this year. Where would you like to go, Ben?
Ben	I don't know, where would you like to go, Mum
Mel	I'd like to go where you'd like to go, Ben.
Ben	I'd like to go where you'd like to go Mum.
Mel	Ben, it's your treat. Look at these pictures. How about <i>(name of)</i> children's farm where you can see lots of chicks. With this coupon it's 'cheap cheap'!
Ben	No, you'd have to be chicken to want to go there. Where else is there?
Mel	A day in London. Look at the tourists mobbed by pigeons in Trafalgar Square!
Ben	No, too crowded! I've grown out of chasing pigeons a long time ago.
Mel	And, if you don't watch out, they splat you on the head!
Ben	Ugh! That's disgusting!
Mel	How about Windermere? We could go walking in the country by the lake.
Ben	Windy, Windermere? What's the weather forecast like?
Mel	Don't worry about the weather. You have waterproofs. See those sheep in the picture? They're out in all weathers and they don't seem to mind.
Ben	Do you remember all those sheep who blocked the road last summer holiday?
Mel	Yes, we had to wait until they moved out of the way.
Ben	We had to wind the window up to stop Dixie from jumping out.
Mel	And because the barking would have scared the sheep. <i>(offstage, Dixie barks once)</i>
Ben	Yes, Dixie. You did bark – you naughty dog. Do you think you're a sheepdog?
Mel	<i>(Dixie starts barking loudly)</i> That's enough, Dixie. You're too noisy to be a sheepdog!
Ben	We were stuck for ages!
Mel	It was only ten minutes!
Ben	It felt like ten hours!
Mel	You did a good job keeping Dixie quiet.
Ben	It took a whole packet of dog biscuits. Dixie scoffed the lot!
Mel	<i>(Dixie barks loudly)</i> No Dixie, you can't have any dog biscuits now. You've had your quota for today.
Ben	I didn't mind waiting for the sheep. It was exciting and we didn't want to scare them away. Let's go back to Lake Windermere, away from crowds of people.
Mel	It will be nice and quiet.
Ben	Far from the busy roads and the noisy traffic.
Mel	<i>(ice cream van sounds)</i> Like that ice cream van!
Ben	I'm not going if they don't have ice cream. Bring on the noisy traffic, Mum! I love it!

Dogs will be Dogs

Ben throws a stick for Dixie, who brings back a stolen toy boat, shoe and tuna sandwich. Ben and Mel are embarrassed and Mel apologises to the owners of these objects. Fortunately they all know and love Dixie. In good humour, they all forgive Dixie for behaving like a dog.

Theme: The sense of community at a Church Picnic where Dixie is accepted despite his dog-like behaviour.

Roots themes explore: Basic needs; community; God's abundance; Jesus' identity

Humour: Sticks thrown, but boat, shoe and tuna sandwich collected and brought back
The tuna is smelly
Dixie feels proud of the 'trophy' found, but Ben is horrified, over-reacting to the situation
Mel braces herself to apologise
The relief that the owners were so understanding about doggy behaviour

Props: 3 Sticks, Toy boat, cheap plastic shoe, piece of bread
Signs saying: 'At the park'

Introduction

Discuss picnics. Where is a good place to go? Who would you invite to a picnic?

Is it a good idea to take a dog on a picnic? What are the advantages and disadvantages? What might go wrong?

Dixie the dog has been allowed to attend a church picnic in a park with a lake. As you can imagine, things go wrong as a result. Shall we find out what happens?

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Dogs will be Dogs'

After the Puppet Sketch

Comment that, fortunately, most dogs are better trained than Dixie.

Would the owners of the boat, shoe and sandwich have been quite so forgiving if they hadn't already known Dixie?

Draw out the nature of a good-natured community where friends can forgive and even laugh about such situations.

Ask what are the loveable features of dogs that make us adore them? Do they have features we don't like? How are dogs different to humans?

Does everyone like dogs? If not, do you think they would have acted the same?

Ask the congregation to think about how Jesus is different to other humans.

What might the people present have said to each other as they grappled with the question 'Who is Jesus?'

The Bible Reading

Ben	Dixie, I want you to be good and sit still while we have our church picnic.
Dixie	<i>(Jumping up)</i> Woof, woof, woof!
Ben	No Dixie! You need to sit still!
Dixie	<i>(Sadly)</i> Woooooof
Ben	Why don't you get rid of some energy now before we start?
Dixie	<i>(Nodding vigorously)</i> Woof, woof
Ben	I'll throw a stick and you can fetch it. Here you go. <i>(throws stick, exit Dixie)</i> That will help use up some of Dixie's energy.
Dixie (enters)	<i>(Proudly carrying toy boat in mouth)</i> Woof, woof
Ben	<i>(Alarmed)</i> Dixie, where did you get that boat? It's not yours! Give it to me.
Dixie	<i>(Holding onto boat)</i> Wwwwwoof! <i>(Ben and Dixie have a tug of war over boat)</i>
Ben	<i>(Gets boat, falls over, gets back up with it held high)</i> I win! Let's try again, but only bring the stick back to me this time, OK?
Dixie	<i>(Ben throws another stick for Dixie to chase)</i> Woo-oo-oof! <i>(exit Dixie)</i>
Ben	<i>(Speaking to himself)</i> Dixie is so naughty. That was stealing!
Dixie (enters)	<i>(proudly carrying a shoe)</i> Woof!
Ben	Not again, Dixie! That shoe belongs to someone! Give it to me! <i>(Grabs it quick)</i>
Dixie	<i>(disappointedly)</i> Woof
Ben	I'll give you one last chance. Fetch the stick this time! <i>(Throws stick)</i>
Dixie	<i>(runs from Ben)</i> Silly Ben. Doesn't he know that dogs will be dogs? <i>(smells a tuna sandwich)</i> MMmm a fishy smell. I like fish. I'd like that sandwich for my lunch!
Ben	<i>(Sees Dixie)</i> Oh crumbs! What are you doing now, Dixie? Put that down! <i>(enter Dixie proudly with sandwich, eats noisily)</i> That's disgusting, Dixie. The tuna is dribbling out. Ugh! Lie down Dixie! <i>(exit Dixie)</i> Mum! We've got dog problems.
Mel (enters)	Dogs will be dogs. What's Dixie been doing this time?
Ben	I tried to help Dixie to get rid of some energy and keep still while we have our picnic, but when I threw a stick Dixie didn't fetch the stick
Mel	Oh dear? I can guess what's coming. What did Dixie fetch instead?
Ben	Someone's toy boat and a shoe. That soggy mess was once a tuna sandwich.
Both	Ooooooo! Yuk!
Ben	I shall never eat a tuna sandwich again
Mel	How embarrassing! The owners of these things could be very angry.
Ben	<i>(Groans)</i> They'll never let Dixie come on the church picnic again <i>(cries)</i>
Mel	The only thing we can do is apologise. Stay here while I go and say sorry. <i>(exit)</i>
Ben	<i>(Embarrassed, covering face with hands)</i> I'm never coming to this park again. I'm never leaving the house again.
Mel (enters)	I saw Jack, the owner of the boat
Ben	<i>(Nervously)</i> What did he say?
Mel	Dogs will be dogs. Jack likes dogs, but he was glad to get his boat back
Ben	What about the shoe?
Mel	I offered to pay for a new pair. But the owner said they were just a tough old plastic pair for paddling in the lake and it gives them an excuse to buy a new pair – so no harm done.
Ben	Phew! What about the sandwich?
Mel	That sandwich which became Dixie's lunch was originally Sally's... So I simply gave her one of ours and she just laughed! They all love Dixie and said...
Both	Dogs will be dogs!

Continental Breakfast

Ben is packing for an overnight camp. It's his job to provide a continental breakfast and he has over-catered. He can't fit everything into the Rucksack. Mel helps him to decide what's needed for a short trip and what can be left behind. Bedtime prayers will remain a priority.

Theme: In the Lord's Prayer, we pray for 'our daily bread'. What did Jesus mean by this?

Roots themes explore: Sign & symbol; sufficiency; believing & believing in

Humour: Ben has over-catered for one day, but still misses Mum's favourite food
Mispronouncing 'pain'
Dixie steals the pain au chocolat
Bread jokes
Air freshener needed near cows
He has packed items not needed for one night and thinks he can't manage without them

Props: Ruck sack
Bread items
Sign saying: 'In the kitchen'

Introduction

Challenge the congregation to see how many different kinds of bread they can list. (Teams could compete against each other.) Which kind of bread would be missed most if you couldn't have any of those in your diet? Hopefully, this introduction has whetted an appetite for the puppet sketch and a continental breakfast.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Continental Breakfast'

After the Puppet Sketch

Ben had over-catered for breakfast and provided a real feast for them both. Is it hard not to pack too many other items when you go away? Ask about some of the silly luxury items that people may take on holiday! Mel told Ben to prioritise the items he packed so that everything would fit in the suitcase and also about prioritising their daily activities. What compact item would she definitely be taking? (Travel Bible)
Mel and Ben would continue their habit of praying at bed-time. Well done Mel, for thinking about Ben's spiritual needs as well as his physical requirements.
Do you have a prayer time routine, whether at bedtime or around the dinner table to thank God for everything that you have? (Suggest resources for family prayer times.)
Emphasise the importance of prioritising the essential items and spending time on important things.

Now listen to what Jesus has to say to the crowd who followed him, hoping for another miracle like the feeding of the 5000 with just two fish and five loaves of bread.

The Bible Story

Ben	I love camping, don't you, Dixie?
Dixie	<i>(Enthusiastically)</i> Woof, woof, woof!
Ben	I've bought breakfast. I've got, white bread - much nicer than brown, Danish pastries, scotch pancakes, bagels, chocolate muffins, this one's got chocolate in it. The name sounds painful <i>(mispronounces as 'Payne')</i> 'Pain o chocolate'. Mmm. I've bought too much for 24 hours. What do you think, Dixie?
Dixie	Woooooof <i>(steals the pain au chocolat and runs off)</i>
Ben	Mum! Dixie's taken our breakfast! <i>(to audience)</i> I hope everything will go in the ruck sack! For an overnight trip I'm packing my pyjamas. Do I really need my toothbrush? I do need my iPad, and my football? I need a bigger rucksack!
Mum (enters)	Why was there a pain au chocolat in Dixie's bed?
Ben	Oh, Dixie!
Mum	Ah, French food! Have you got my favourite breakfast treat, croissants?
Ben	Errrrrmmm!
Mel	<i>(Looking)</i> Everything except croissants, I see. That's OK. We have lots!!!!
Ben	I can't fit everything I need into my rucksack.
Mel	I thought we were going to travel light! We're only going for one night! You really don't need all this stuff for just an overnight, surely!
Ben	<i>(Hopefully)</i> You're right – I don't need my toothbrush... or the soap!!!
Mel	You definitely need those, Ben. You must wash every day! Take a blow-up beach ball, but not your iPad - it could get broken.
Ben	<i>(Disappointedly)</i> I suppose so! Do you have trouble packing small, Mum?
Mel	I manage without a hairdryer and take a small travel Bible so that I can still do my daily devotions. I've brought you up to pray every day haven't I, Ben!
Ben	Yes Mum. It's special when we pray together. Do you like our breakfast?
Mel	How many cakes have you bought? Oh crumbs!
Ben	Biscuits, muffins and bread too, Mum. I really do like bread.
Mel	Then you'll like this joke. Why doesn't bread like camping in hot weather?
Ben	I don't know, Mum. Why doesn't bread like camping in hot weather?
Mel	Things get toasty!
Ben	<i>(Groans)</i> Toasty, eh Mum? And we're not even packing the toaster... Hmm maybe we should put one in – just in case?
Mel	<i>(Quickly)</i> I think not! What'll we do after eating our bread breakfast?
Ben	I don't know, Mum. What will we do after eating bread breakfast?
Mel	Probably just loaf around!
Ben	Loafing around is all I can do without my football or iPad. I can't manage without them even for one day. They are a daily necessity!!!
Mel	You wouldn't say that, if you were starving to death. When Jesus taught us to pray, he said 'Give us our daily bread.' It's right to ask for the things we really need, but not to get greedy. The fun of camping is to manage without stuff we don't need and enjoy God's nature and breathe His healthy fresh air.
Ben	Yeah. Natural fresh air. I'll take out the air freshener then. <i>(thinks)</i> We're not near a farm with cows. I hope!

Fridge Crisis

Dixie wakes up Mel because the fridge has broken and the food inside is going off. Ben offers to help sort out the food, using sell-by dates as a guide to how quickly everything needs eating or throwing away. He asks whether there is any food that lasts for ever? Mel says that Jesus is the living bread and that anyone who eats it will not die but live forever.

Theme: Recognising Jesus as the Son of God and the source of eternal life.

Roots themes explore: Recognising truth; Jesus' identity; being living bread and agents of grace

Humour: Mel doesn't want to wake up
Frustrates Dixie by not understanding the problem
Horror at the smell inside the fridge and the best food gone
Dropping an egg, making a mess which Dixie clears up quickly
Finding mouldy bread at the back of the fridge
Bread jokes

Props: Egg (either real or a rubber fake egg)
Piece of bread
Other food items with various sell-by dates (or projected onto screen)
Signs saying: 'In the bedroom' & 'In the kitchen'

Introduction

Show the food items that will be used as props for the puppet sketch.
Invite a child to arrange them in order, according to sell-by dates (without looking). Which will last longer?
Adults in the congregation may wish to refine the order, then check, using a magnifying glass!
Discuss the pros and cons of sell-by dates. (A useful guide, but it's important to store food correctly too)
Do we always pay attention to the use by and best before dates on food?
Are there any that would be dangerous to eat beyond the date?
Ask the congregation to listen out for the food that lasts forever.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Fridge Crisis'

After the Puppet Sketch

Reinforce that Jesus can offer living bread that lasts forever because He is the Son of God.

As you listen to the Bible reading, think about the nature of the bread that Jesus is offering to us.
How do we get the living bread that Jesus spoke about?

The Bible Story

Mel	Zzzzzzz! Zzzzzzzz! <i>(Mel snores comically)</i>
Dixie (enters)	<i>(Whimpers and pats Mel who just turns over. Dixie persists until she wakes)</i>
Mel	Go away! It's not time to get up! We got back late last night and I'm tired!
Dixie	<i>(Loudly)</i> Woof, woof!
Mel	Is something wrong, Dixie? <i>(Dixie nods, Mel grunts follows Dixie to the kitchen yawning)</i>
Dixie	That took a long time. My humans are a bit slow on the uptake!

In the kitchen

Dixie	<i>(Loudly)</i> Woof, woof! <i>(indicates fridge door)</i> Woof!
Mel	Are you hungry? What do you want from the fridge? You're always hungry!
Dixie	<i>(Shakes head)</i> Woof, woof, woof <i>(pats door with paw)</i>
Mel	<i>(Opens door wider, jerks back)</i> what a smell! Poo-ey. That's why you barked! <i>(Dixie nods)</i> The fridge is broken. Everything's gone off! <i>(Picks up egg, accidentally drops it.)</i> Look what I've done. What a mess! <i>(Dixie licks it noisily)</i> Dixie! Manners, please!
Dixie	Woof, woof, woof! <i>(exit)</i>
Mel	Stinky, pinky! All the food has gone off. Even the chocolate mousse. I was looking forward to eating that. And the cream gateau. Naughty, but nice!
Ben (enters)	What's up, Mum? What's the disaster?
Mel	The fridge stopped working and the door opened while we were away.
Ben	What a smell! Can I help you, Mum?
Mel	Please! I'm feeling devastated about throwing away my chocolate mousse.
Ben	Has all the food gone off?
Mel	Maybe not. We've a cool box and freezer blocks. We can save some of it
Ben	This cheese has gone mouldy, Mum. <i>(ugh!)</i>
Mel	That's Danish blue. It's supposed to be like that. Put it in the cool box. This sliced meat must definitely go in the bin. It reeks!
Ben	I've found some bread that's mouldy. That's definitely not right. In the bin!
Mel	Here's a joke. Why are bread jokes always funny?
Ben	I don't know. Why are bread jokes always funny?
Mel	Because they never get mould! <i>(old)</i>
Ben	That's a terrible joke, Mum, what's this?
Mel	That's yeast for making bread. It grows when it gets warm. We can save that. Hey, I've got another joke for you. What did the yeast say to the bag of flour?
Ben	I don't know. What did the yeast say to the bag of flour?
Mel	Come on, we knead to be serious
Ben	I'm sure the jokes are getting worse. If it was tinned food, we wouldn't have to throw it. Tinned food lasts forever, doesn't it?
Mel	Sorry, Ben. Even tinned food has use-by dates. No food lasts forever.
Ben	Last week you said that Jesus is the bread of life. Doesn't Jesus last forever?
Mel	Yes. Jesus is the living bread. Anyone who eats it will not die but live forever.
Ben	That's amazing! I'd like to live forever! Did He really say that?
Mel	Yes, He said He came from Heaven. It confused people at the time. Today, we know that He's the Son of God, so we can understand what he meant.
Ben	Yeah, it only makes sense when you know that Jesus is the Son of God.
Mel	That's right, Son!

Cannibal Picnic

Ben is learning about cannibals at school and spends his pocket money on ginger bread men and jelly babies. The gingerbread man breaks into pieces trying to escape. Dixie takes some and disappears. A Jelly Baby announces 'I'm a baby that kills babies and is used to demonstrate what to do with a choking baby. Mel suggests that the different coloured Jelly Babies can each represent an aspect of the Salvation story.

Theme: Jesus shockingly suggests that His followers eat His flesh to gain eternal life!

Roots themes explore: The scandal of the cross; communion as a public act; being living bread

Humour: Ben ignores Dixie's disinterest and talks about cannibals anyway
Cannibal jokes
An escaping gingerbread man
Dixie is greedy again, taking advantage of the broken gingerbread man
A dog thinks a human is crazy
Doing CPR on a jelly baby

Props: Gingerbread men
Packet of Jelly Babies
Sign saying: 'In the kitchen'

Additional resources: Youtube: 'The chokeables'
Song: Jim Bailey 'The Colours of Salvation'

Introduction

Find out how the congregation like to eat their Jelly Babies. Do they have a favourite colour?
Say that a study proved that mothers are the most likely to eat them head first. (Terry Wogan in Comic Relief)
Be shocked that you have a congregation of cannibals.
Today Ben is fascinated by cannibals.

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Cannibal Picnic'

After the Puppet Sketch

Comment on the doll modelling a life-saving technique for rescuing the life of a choking baby and recommend any local first aid courses.
Explain that the idea of Ben being a cannibal eating Jelly Babies while thinking about the cross of Jesus might sound a bit bizarre, but so are the words of Jesus that you are about to hear. The original audience would have felt shocked.
Run through the different colours of the Jelly Babies and the link to the salvation story.

The Bible Story

Ben	Hey, Dixie, would you like to join me on a cannibal picnic? I've got Gingerbread men and Jelly Babies!
Dixie	Woof, woof!
Ben	You're wondering why I'm suddenly interested in cannibals? It's a school project and I thought it would be fun to be one for the day. I've bought these humanoids with my pocket money. Shall I tell you about cannibals?
Dixie	<i>(shakes head, growls and yawns during Ben's next speech)</i>
Ben	Well, I'm going to tell you anyway! Canibales was the Spanish name for a tribe of cannibals. It has been practised in various places in the world through history, cannibals sometimes believing that it gives the eater some of the characteristics of the person they have eaten. It was not practised as widely as people think. The Europeans who ruled their different empires accused tribes of cannibalism to justify making them slaves.
Dixie	<i>(shakes head and growls)</i>
Ben	This ginger bread man is trying to make a run for it. Like in the story... 'Run, run, as fast as you can. You can't catch me I'm the gingerbread man.' <i>(Ben drops the gingerbread man, Dixie grabs a piece and runs off)</i>
Dixie	Ben's off his rocker! He's crazy! <i>(exit)</i>
Ben	<i>(To audience)</i> Have you seen the chokeables advert starring a Jelly baby? He says 'I'm a baby that chokes babies. Such a tragic irony' Then the princess puts the jelly baby on her lap and demonstrates five back blows followed by up to five chest thrusts to help a choking baby. Like this <i>(slaps Jelly Baby back)</i> 1,2,3,4,5;1 <i>(thrusts on JB front)</i> 2,3,4,5. Then phone an ambulance.
Mel <i>(enters)</i>	Where did Dixie get that Gingerbread man from?
Ben	I bought it with my pocket money so I could have a cannibal's picnic
Mel	What?
Ben	We learnt about them at school and the idea made us all laugh.
Mel	<i>(Puzzled)</i> Right! Here's a joke for you. Two cannibals were eating a clown. One says to the other 'Does this taste funny to you?'
Ben	<i>(Laughs)</i> Do you know any more cannibal jokes I can put in my school project?
Mel	Why don't cannibals eat priests?
Ben	I don't know? Why don't cannibals eat priests?
Mel	Because you can't keep a good man down!
Ben	<i>(Thinks)</i> Mmmm! You can't keep a good man down? Let's tell that one to our church friends.
Mel	If you like. It's the third Sunday and a Holy Communion service tomorrow so there will be a priest there. It's a complimentary joke for a priest to hear.
Ben	I like all the different colours for Jelly Babies.
Mel	Me too! Each one could represent part of God's story of salvation. When you eat a black one think of sin. The red one can represent the blood of Jesus. Green can represent all of God's creation and the white one can be Jesus when we see Him in Heaven. You could be blessed by these Jelly Babies.
Ben	Don't be daft Mum. Jelly Babies can't bless you – they're just sweets! Yum!

Strong Fortress

Mel and Ben cross rough ground to go inside a castle with only one entrance. They are impressed by the strong defences and a suit of armour.

N.B. A narrator reads the part of the tour guide and helps the congregation to join in with repeated words and actions of 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'.

Theme: Staying with Jesus, the only way to God, even when things get tough
Roots themes explore: Abiding in Jesus; turning to and from God; standing firm

Humour: Most tourists chose to see the castle from a distance and drink coffee
Anyone who likes football isn't going to mind a bit of mud
'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' actions, but they really aren't scared
Fellow travellers give up along the way
Heavy metal pun
The thought of swimming in the dirty moat water
Dixie is very pleased to see them on their return

Props: Pictures of medieval knight's armour and a castle with a moat
Sign saying: At a café near a castle

Introduction

Find out whether anyone has been to visit a castle this summer.
Let them tell you about the fortifications and how it was defended against enemies.
How easy was it for tourists to get in? Do you think it was always that easy to get in?

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Strong Fortress'

After the Puppet Sketch

Did you notice that several group members started on the journey to the castle with Mel and Ben, but gave up along the way when the going got tough? Can you remember why some of them gave up?
Ask why there is only one entrance to the castle (over the drawbridge which can be pulled up).
Do you think it was worth the tricky walk to see inside the castle?
Which required less effort to see, the dungeon or the view from the top of the keep?

Was the disciple, Peter, the sort of character to give up at the first hurdle?
Listen to what he says about Jesus at the end of today's Bible reading.

The Bible Story

Guide (offstage)	My name is Margaret. I'm your guide today. You have a choice for this part of the tour. You can stay here at the café, drink coffee or something cool, enjoying the fine view of the Castle, or you can walk across the rough, muddy wet field to go and see what it's like inside. Sorry, no dogs are allowed inside the castle.
Dixie (offstage)	<i>(Disappointedly)</i> Woooof, woooof!
Mel	Sorry, Dixie. We shall have to leave you here at the café. You'll be fine.
Ben	I'd really like to go inside and see the armour. Let's join the group.
Mel	Do you mind getting your shoes muddy?
Ben	Of course not - I play football! It's a long way to the only drawbridge to get in.
Mel	The route reminds me of 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'
Ben	'We're not scared'. Did you really think I'd be scared of a bit of mud?
Mel	<i>(To side)</i> Bye Margaret, are you going back to the café? Uh oh, here comes mud.
Both	*Squelch, squelch, squelch, squelch <i>(*congregation joins in with actions)</i>
Mel	Uh oh, here's a hill. <i>(to side)</i> Oh OK, bye Shirley. Yes it does look very steep.
Both	*Climb, climb, climb, climb
Mel	And down the other side!
Both	*Run, run, run, run
Mel	Through the long grass. <i>(to side)</i> Oh OK, bye Oliver! Yes, the grass is taller than your zimmer frame. There's only the two of us left now, Ben. This grass is long!
Both	*Swishy, swashy, swishy, swashy
Mel	And across the river *swim, swim, swim, swim <i>(Ben doesn't do actions)</i>
Ben	Errm... There's a drawbridge, Mum. We really don't need to swim.
Mel	Thanks Ben. Here's a knight in shining armour to greet us.
Ben	Obviously a heavy metal fan. He's pointing to the dark dungeons.
Mel	I'd rather go to the top and see the view. It's a hard climb, but worth it.
Ben	Let's do both. Dungeons first – they're easier to get to
Mel	First though, look around you and tell me how the inhabitants of this castle defended it against enemies.
Ben	They would have to cross the muddy field first. Maybe they had quick sand in those days? The knights in shining armour would gradually sink!
Mel	Which would give them time to pull up the drawbridge and close the gate.
Ben	The castle has a strong wall around it and the knights are in armour.
Mel	Arrows can be fired through those narrow holes in the wall just there. <i>(points)</i>
Ben	They had cannonballs and hot tar. I'm glad tourists are more welcome!
Mel	We made the right choice, walking across the drawbridge
Ben	You were going to swim the moat. Mum. That would have looked fishy.
Mel	Hmmm, you're right, looking very fishy in disgustingly dirty stagnant moat water. If it survived the pollution, any fish would have been eaten during the last siege, I think.
Ben	I wonder what the others had to eat at the café? Let's see if we can see them from the top of the tower.
Mel	Yes, OK Ben, then we can head back across the drawbridge – walk, walk, not swim swim, through the grass, up the hill and down again, across the muddy field.
Ben	We weren't scared!
Mel	Definitely not! <i>(from top of tower)</i> Hey look, I can see Dixie! Wait... hang on... is that...? How did Dixie manage to order that much cake! <i>(Dixie barks happily in the background.)</i>

Bath the Baby

Mel's cousin and her young baby are visiting. The baby has a strict bedtime and bath routine. Ben decides he doesn't like crying babies and wonders why they need a daily bath anyway. Mel explains that rules change as you grow older, but we all need to be loved and cared for.

Theme: Rituals can be useful, but it's more important to apply them lovingly in a way that is pleasing to God.
Roots themes explore: Custom & ritual; rules & laws; worship & living

Humour: Boys like Ben aren't interested in babies like Mums are
The baby cries at bath-time
Ben doesn't like washing and wouldn't need to if he were a pirate
Pirates are 'unclean' because they are thieves, not because they don't wash
Ben makes an effort to 'like' the baby

Props: Baby doll wrapped in towel
Sign saying: 'In the lounge'

Introduction

Estimate how many times a day people generally wash their hands.

When do we need to wash our hands?

Which of those hand-washing times are important for health reasons? Is it sometimes symbolic? (e.g. Pontius Pilate)

Are there any other strategies for keeping hand germs away from food (caterers' gloves or using tongs)

Introduce the Puppet Sketch 'Bath the Baby'

After the Puppet Sketch

Is it a good rule for to have a bedtime bath every day? (Sometimes)

Is it right that rules for small children should be different to rules for adults? (Yes, if there's a good reason)

Adults are expected to have the maturity to know how to apply rules in ways that help the community.

More important than ritual of the bath, how can we tell that both Ben and the baby are loved by their mothers?

In today's Bible reading, listen out for a ritual that wasn't followed and what is valued more by God.

The Bible Story

Dixie	<i>(Loudly)</i> Woof, woof, woof!
Ben	Quiet, Dixie. You'll wake the baby
Baby (offstage)	<i>(Loudly)</i> Waaaa! Waaaa! Waaaa!
Ben	Maybe the baby will keep you awake! Why do women like noisy babies?
Dixie	<i>(Asking to be let out)</i> Woof, woof.
Ben	I don't blame you for wanting to go out in the garden. Bye, bye <i>(exit Dixie, Ben covers ears)</i> I don't like babies either!
Baby (offstage)	Waaaa! Waaaa! Waaaa!
Mel (enters)	Isn't it wonderful my cousin Emily has brought her baby to stay?
Ben	<i>(Uncertainly)</i> umm... yeah. I hope she's not going to cry through the night?
Mel	Well... Babies do that sometimes. She's only little. Emily will see to her.
Ben	But I don't want to be woken up in the night. Why was she crying earlier?
Mel	It was bath time. Young babies don't always enjoy having a bath.
Ben	Then why give her one? She's not exactly dirty, is she!
Mel	It's part of her bed-time routine. It helps to make her sleepy.
Ben	Sounded more like torture to me! I don't bath every night.
Mel	You did when you were a baby and you shower daily if the weather is hot. There are different rules for different situations.
Ben	I wish I was a pirate. They never have to wash.
Mel	Why do boys have to be allergic to soap and water? Pirates are dirty.
Ben	Dirty, but happy...
Mel	Are they happy? I wonder... Would you really want to be a thief at sea? The stories make it sound exciting, but I don't think it is, really.
Ben	<i>(Thinks)</i> I suppose not. I'd be scared to meet a real, modern day pirate.
Mel	A real pirate is unpopular because he's violent, not because he's dirty. Nobody wants to be attacked for their money, either at sea or on land.
Ben	Yeah, it's their actions that make them bad, not the dirty hands.
Mel	Clean hands are good, but a clean heart is more important. Now, what were you saying about babies?
Ben	I don't like them!
Mel	Auntie Emily would be very upset to hear you say that. I want you to make them feel welcome while they're staying with us. You can start by taking this baby monitor upstairs and giving it to Emily to plug in.
Ben	I don't mind doing that, now that the baby has stopped crying.
Mel	If she starts crying again, Emily will go and see to her. You don't have to.
Ben	OK, Mum. I won't tell her that I don't like babies. <i>(exit)</i>
Mel	I hope Ben is nice to Auntie Emily. How can anyone not love a baby? They're so sweet!
Baby (offstage)	<i>(Starting loud, but getting quieter)</i> Waaaaaa, waaaa, waaa, waa, waa...
Mel	It sounds like she's fallen asleep, now. At last! <i>(Ben returns)</i>
Ben	She's so sweet when she's asleep! Lying peacefully in her mother's arms.
Mel	That's better, Ben. I'm really glad to hear you've learnt to love babies.
Ben	Hmmmm!