

Holy Week & Easter at Home

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CHITTERNE • ORCHESTON
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*We have created this booklet for use at home during the coming weeks.
Inside you can find:*

- *A Story called The Three Trees*
- *Experience Easter at Home activity*
- *Easter Cookie Recipe & Activity*
- *Ideas for Prayers and reflections at home*
- *Home Church*
- *I Can Pray a Rainbow*

The Three Trees

We used this story at our Family Service a couple of years ago. It could be a great bedtime story, or a story to start a conversation with your children about what we believe. You can ignore the prompts for Narrator etc. at the side, or you can read it out between 4 of you if you have enough people!

Narrator: Long ago in the far away land of Palestine, three trees stood on a hillside overlooking a seaside town. Each tree had great hopes and dreams of what it would be when fully grown.

1st Tree: The first tree boasted that its lumber would be used to make a great and beautiful treasure chest. The chest would be decorated with bright golden hinges and polished to a fine and shiny finish. Inside it would hold great riches, jewels which were the colours of the rainbow and gold and silver coins.

2nd Tree: The second tree claimed that it would be fashioned into a fine sailing ship. The ship would sail the high seas and travel to far and exotic places. The passengers would be kings and soldiers and statesmen who would marvel at the beauty of such a wonderful ship and the smooth and safe voyages it gave them.

3rd Tree: The third tree declared that it would not be cut down and used by man for any of his needs. This tree would be left standing because of its beauty and strength. People would look at the reach of this tree's branches and would think of God and all His glory as they gazed upward to the sky.

Narrator: Then one day three men with axes came to the hill where the trees stood tall and full.

1st Tree: As each tree stood in anticipation of their fate, the first man approached the first tree. He examined it and decided it was a good tree for his uses and so he cut it down.

2nd Tree: The second man looked at the second tree and assessing its sturdiness and good quality proceeded to chop it down.

3rd Tree: The third man stood looking at the third tree who reached its branches ever upward, hoping he would leave the tree alone to live its days on that hill. However, the third man judged the tree to be perfect for his needs, and cut it down.

1st Tree: Now the first tree that had dreamed of being a beautiful treasure chest was instead made into a manger. It was sold to a farmer who used it in his

cave where he kept and fed his animals. From this manger the animals of the farm ate the hay that lay in it.

2nd Tree: Sometime later, the second tree was made into a small fishing boat. Its dreams of becoming a great sailing ship were gone. Now it carried fishermen and the quantities of fish that they caught each day from a small sea.

3rd Tree: The third tree spent many years in a lumber yard until one Friday morning it was yanked out of the pile of lumber it had lain in. It was made into a crucifix and put on the shoulders of a tired man who had been badly beaten. The tree was filled with shame at what it had become a part of.

1st Tree: One night a young woman and her husband came to the cave looking for shelter for themselves and their newborn baby. In that manger, they laid their infant son. It was at that moment that the tree knew that it held the greatest treasure in the world.

2nd Tree: Suddenly a great storm arose and waves rocked the boat back and forth as it tried to steady itself to keep from being wrecked. Then a man raised his hand saying, "Peace" and all was calm around them. At that moment the second tree knew that it carried a man greater than any worldly king and that it sailed a greater adventure than it could ever have dreamed of.

3rd Tree: Then as the man died upon the cross a great storm descended from heaven and the earth shook. At that moment the tree felt the power of God radiating through it.

Narrator: Two days later, on Sunday morning the sun rose and joy and warmth filled the air as God's love changed all that had gone before.

1st Tree: God's love made the first tree beautiful.

2nd Tree: It made the second tree strong.

3rd Tree: And each time people looked upon the third tree they thought of God.

Experience Easter at Home

We were planning to do Experience Easter with the whole of Shrewton School during the last week of term. Instead, we've adapted it a bit so you can try and do it at home. You can do this all at once, or actually over a few days, following the story if you want to. Before you begin, see if you can get the following things together:

- Some chalks
- A whistle/drum/maracas etc
- Pitta bread or a roll
- Squash or water
- Cosy cushions/picnic blanket
- Lantern or electric candle
- Really long piece of ribbon or string/wool
- Lots of pebbles, stones, shells or even small lego bricks or bottle tops
- A foil tray or long rectangular dish
- Some soil/grass or moss
- (Seeds and plant pot if you have them)
- Small stones or pebbles
- Twigs or sticks to make a cross

Palm Sunday

We gather at the gate to our homes (or if it's pouring with rain, do this inside and start at the front door), and talk about the journey into Jerusalem.

Story:

'When Jesus came into the great city of Jerusalem the crowd was excited and restless. Many had heard of Jesus' teaching and miracles. They longed for a leader who would help them drive the Romans from their land so that they could live in peace and prosperity. As Jesus rode through the city gates on a young donkey the people cheered and praised God. 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.' As people began to throw their cloaks and

palm leaves onto the ground to pave the way for Jesus, their hearts were full of expectation. Some of the religious leaders grumbled at Jesus but he told them that even if the crowds were silent the very stones would cry out.'

Opening Question:

How did it feel to see Jesus coming into the Holy City on that special day? Why was he on a donkey? What did the people do when they saw Jesus?

Response:

Choose a place to travel to. If you are outside, make it your front door. If you are inside, how about the sitting room, or your bedroom?

If you are outside and you have a flat path, maybe you can decorate the path with chalk? Can you draw big palm leaves or flowers to lay down along the path?

Choose someone in your group to be Jesus

Now everyone else needs to move into position along the length of the tree-lined avenue. Pick up an instrument so you can make some noise. Or just do some waving and shouting! If you don't have many people in your house, why not get some of your bears/cuddly toys out to help line the route?

Now, whoever has decided to be 'Jesus' will come along the avenue on his donkey as you cheer and play your instrument/ make some noise.



Thursday: The Last Supper

Now we are going to remember Jesus having a meal with his friends.

Find a space where you can sit together. Maybe you use a table for your meals, or you could create a picnic area outside in the garden. Maybe just put out a blanket on your sitting room floor. If you have a candle or a special electric candle/lantern, why not light it. Imagine you are at a really special occasion, like a Christmas dinner or a birthday party.

You need to get some bread and some squash to drink.

Now, gather round and listen to these words:

Story:

The Bible tells us about this special time:

On the night before he died, Jesus had supper with his friends. He took some bread and thanking God for it he broke the bread. (Leader slowly breaks the bread as they speak).

Jesus gave the bread to each of his disciples and said 'take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this to remember me'.

Opening Question:

Do you have any special objects to help you remember an important time in your life? (e.g. birthday badge/cards, Christening presents etc. Leader suggests something if required)

When Christians meet together they often share bread and wine to remember the last meal Jesus had with his friends before he died.

Response: Pass the plate of bread around the group. If you would like to, take a piece of the bread to eat and drink some squash and think of something you remember about Jesus.



Thursday Garden of Gethsemane

Is it horrible weather outside? Well you need to find a space inside for this activity. Not horrible weather outside? Then you need to get into your garden!

Imagine it's evening...you might even want to do this activity before bed...

Now, we're in a garden, and Jesus is on his own with his followers...let's hear what happens...

Story:

When Jesus and his followers had finished their meal, they went out into this garden. Jesus wanted to talk to God, to pray. He knew that soon the soldiers would come and arrest him. He asked his friends to stay with him while he prayed. But it was late, and dark, and the disciples were soon fast asleep. Jesus was all alone. He asked God to help him- he wanted to know that God was with him, and would give him strength for what would come.

Jesus wanted more than anything to do what his Father God wanted. What lay ahead would be his greatest challenge. He would soon be surrounded by a violent mob who wanted to arrest him and kill him. So the first thing Jesus did was pray, talk to God, and God gave Jesus the inner strength he needed by sending an angel.

Reflection:

Sometimes, when things seem too difficult to face, everything in us wants to run away and hide. Jesus showed real courage by first turning to God in prayer.

Response:

Take a ribbon or a long piece of string or coloured wool. If you have a tree outside, take the ribbon or string and tie it into the branches of your tree. If you don't have a tree outside, maybe you can pin the ribbon to the top of a door frame (you'll probably need an adult to do this for you). As you look at your ribbon hanging down towards the ground, think of anything in your life that is scary or difficult. Remember that God sent an angel from heaven to strengthen Jesus. You can ask God to give you the same courage to face the things that bother you. The ribbon is a sign of God reaching down from heaven to earth.



Friday: The Cross

Is there a space in your garden where you could make something and leave it there? If not, can you find a windowsill or something like that?

OK, go back to where you left your ribbon, and let's follow the story onwards...

Opening Question:

Do you know what happened to Jesus as he was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane? (he was arrested, taken to Pilate, the Roman Governor and sentenced to die on a cross, the Roman way of killing criminals.)

Let us walk together to Golgotha. (go to the place you've found in your garden or a windowsill)

Story:

Jesus was crucified on a cross. They had placed a crown of thorns on his head. While they waited for Jesus to die the soldiers threw dice to see which one of them would keep Jesus' robe. When he became thirsty the soldiers offered him a sponge soaked in vinegar. At three o'clock that day, Jesus died.

The cross reminds us of the death of Jesus, but because he rose again, the cross has also become a sign of hope for anyone who is suffering.

Response:

If you're outside, go round your garden and find some twigs or feathers, pebbles or shells (we have some in our garden, from when we've been to the seaside). Gather as many things as you can.

If you're inside, can you find a collection of things which would fit onto your windowsill? Maybe you've got a load of plastic bottle tops, or even some erasers or paperclips. Maybe you have a collection of decorative glass pebbles or shells from the seaside.

Use the materials you have been given to make a cross on the ground or on your windowsill;. As you do this think about the people in the world who are

suffering today. If you want to, you can ask God to help them to know that he is with them and that he loves them very much.



Easter: The empty tomb

Opening Questions:

On the first day of the week (Sunday) after Jesus had been buried, some of the ladies who were his friends visited the tomb. They were going to look after his body. But what did they find?

OK, let's listen to the story...

Story:

It was just before dawn on the 3rd day after Jesus had died when Mary Magdalene and her friend set off for his tomb. As they approached in the grey morning light a sudden violent earthquake shook the ground and filled the air with dust. In a dazzling flash of light an angel appeared and rolled the huge stone away from the entrance of the tomb. The women were terrified!

‘Do not be afraid, for I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He is risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.’

The women crept up to the tomb and peered into the darkness. With their own eyes they saw that Jesus was no longer there.. They turned and ran faster than they had ever run before, still fearful, yet brimming over with excitement.

Suddenly, Jesus met them. He was standing right there! The women fell down at his feet. ‘Do not be afraid,’ Jesus smiled, ‘go and tell my friends to go back to Galilee. They will see me there.’ So the two women did just what Jesus said. No one could quite believe what was happening!

Response:

How do you think you would have felt on that first morning to find the tomb empty and Jesus no-where to be seen?

Can you make something that reminds you of what happened at Easter? Here are a couple of ideas:

Planting seeds

Have you ever had a good, hard look at seeds? They look pretty dry and useless don’t they? But every single one has life inside it. What can you grow? Do you have a sunflower seed in the cupboard, or some flower seed tucked away from last year? Do you have some veggie seeds which you’ve already started to grow?

If you’ve got some seed you haven’t planted yet, then see if you can get it into the soil today. If you have a small plant pot, pop the seeds in there with some soil from the garden. If you don’t have a pot, you could start off using a yogurt pot and then plant them out when they’ve started to grow. What can you grow?

As you plant your seeds, think about new life coming from something that looks dried up and useless. Later in the summer, maybe we’ll be able to share all the things we’ve grown!

Making an Easter garden

You can make an Easter garden with soil and grass seed and all sorts of fancy little plants from the Garden Centre, but you can also make a garden really easily with things you can find at home. That's a good job because right now, the Garden Centres are all shut!

Find a tray- maybe an old foil tray or a dish that you don't need. Maybe you have a seed tray if someone at home has been doing some gardening. It doesn't have to be big!

OK, so you might want to dig up some soil with the grass attached- a section of turf from the garden. But you might not be allowed to do that. So when I was a little girl, we used to use moss. There's plenty of moss around. Lift the moss up, in a single block if you can, then fit it into the tray you've found.

Next you need to make a tomb. You could make this with some pebbles piled up. You need one pebble to be the stone across the front of the tomb. Put that one up on its side and roll it to one side so the tomb is 'open'. Tuck a tiny piece of fabric into the tomb. That stands for the cloth covering Jesus which was left behind.

Finally, make 3 crosses- or one if it's tricky to make them. You can make them using twigs- one long and one half its length. Make the shape of a cross with the twigs and then wind string or thread around the place where they meet. That will hold them together. Or, if you have a larger garden, you could stick two lolly sticks together; just make sure the one which goes across the upright lolly stick is shorter. You might need an adult to help you with this.

If you have any little flowers you can put them into the garden too. But otherwise, you've got all the pieces you need.



Easter Cookies Activity

Begin this activity on Good Friday

You will need:

A bowl

Rolling pin

Whisk – hand or electric

Baking sheet

1 cup Nuts – walnuts/pecans are good –if nut allergies you could use something else but not add to the recipe, or you can use the nuts but not add them to the recipe.

1 tsp Vinegar

3 egg whites

1 pinch salt

1 cup caster sugar

Put the oven on to 300 degrees, or its highest setting.

Put the nuts in a bag and beat them with rolling pin.

This reminds us that after Jesus was arrested the soldiers beat him.

Reading 1 - John ch 19 v1-3

Smell the vinegar. Put 1tsp in bowl.

When Jesus was on the cross he was thirsty, and was given vinegar to drink.

Reading 2 - John 19 v 28-30

Add the egg whites to the bowl

Eggs represent new life, Jesus gave his life to give us eternal life

Reading 3 - John 10 v 10-11

Sprinkle a little salt into the childrens hands, let them taste it and brush the rest into the bowl.

This represents the salty tears shed by Jesus' followers and the bitterness of our own sin.

Reading 4 - Luke 23 v 27

So far the ingredients are not very appetizing.

Add 1 cup of sugar.

The sweetest part of the story is that Jesus died because he loves us. He wants us to know and belong to him.

Reading 5 - John 3 v 16

Whisk the mixture until soft peaks.

The colour represents the purity in Gods eyes of those whose sins have been cleansed.

Reading 6 - Isaiah 1 v 18

Fold in the nuts

Drop by teaspoons onto non stick baking parchment on baking sheet.

Each mound represents the rocky tomb where Jesus' body was laid.

Reading 7 - Matthew 27 v 57-60

Put baking sheet into the oven and close the door, turn off.

Give each child a piece of tape and seal the oven door.

Jesus' tomb was sealed with a boulder.

Reading 8 - Matthew 27 v 65-66

Leave the oven closed overnight – And for Saturday too!

The children may be sad to leave the cakes overnight.

This shows them the despair and sadness that Jesus' followers felt when the tomb was sealed.

Reading 9 - John 16 v 20+22

Easter morning open the oven door and everyone gets a cookie

Notice the cracked surface and take a bite. The cookies are hollow. This represents the empty tomb that Jesus' followers found. Jesus had gone.

Reading 10 - Matthew 28 v1-9

Readings:

1. Jesus Dies John 19 Easy-to-Read Version (ERV)

²⁸ Later, Jesus knew that everything had been done. To make the Scriptures come true he said, “I am thirsty.”^[a] ²⁹ There was a jar full of sour wine there, so the soldiers soaked a sponge in it. They put the sponge on a branch of a hyssop plant and lifted it to Jesus’ mouth. ³⁰ When he tasted the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and died.

2. John 10 Easy-to-Read Version (ERV)

¹⁰ A thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But I came to give life—life that is full and good.

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd, and the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

3. Luke 23 Easy-to-Read Version (ERV)

²⁷ A large crowd followed Jesus. Some of the women were sad and crying. They felt sorry for him. ²⁸ But Jesus turned and said to the women, “Women of Jerusalem, don’t cry for me. Cry for yourselves and for your children too.

4. John 3 Easy-to-Read Version (ERV)

¹⁶ Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him would not be lost but have eternal life.

5. Isaiah 1 Easy-to-Read Version (ERV)

¹⁸ “I, the LORD, am the one speaking to you. Come, let’s discuss this. Even if your sins are as dark as red dye, that stain can be removed and you will be as pure as wool that is as white as snow.

6. Jesus Is Buried Matthew 27 Easy-to-Read Version (ERV)

⁵⁷ That evening a rich man named Joseph came to Jerusalem. He was a follower of Jesus from the town of Arimathea. ⁵⁸ He went to Pilate and asked to have Jesus’ body. Pilate gave orders for the soldiers to give Jesus’ body to him. ⁵⁹ Then Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a new linen cloth. ⁶⁰ He put Jesus’ body in a new tomb that he had dug in a wall of rock. Then he closed the tomb by rolling a very large stone to cover the entrance. After he did this, he went away. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other woman named Mary were sitting near the tomb.

7. Matthew 27 Easy-to-Read Version (ERV)

⁶⁵ Pilate said, “Take some soldiers and go guard the tomb the best way you know.” ⁶⁶ So they all went to the tomb and made it safe from thieves. They did this by sealing the stone in the entrance and putting soldiers there to guard it.

8. John 16 Easy-to-Read Version (ERV)

²⁰ The truth is, you will cry and be sad, but the world will be happy. You will be sad, but then your sadness will change to happiness. ²² It is the same with you. Now you are sad, but I will see you again, and you will be happy. You will have a joy that no one can take away.

9. Matthew 28 Easy-to-Read Version (ERV)

News That Jesus Has Risen From Death

28 The day after the Sabbath day was the first day of the week. That day at dawn Mary Magdalene and the other woman named Mary went to look at the tomb.

² Suddenly an angel of the Lord came from the sky, and there was a huge earthquake. The angel went to the tomb and rolled the stone away from the entrance. Then he sat on top of the stone. ³ The angel was shining as bright as lightning. His clothes were as white as snow. ⁴ The soldiers guarding the tomb were very afraid of the angel. They shook with fear and then became like dead men.

⁵ The angel said to the women, “Don’t be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, the one who was killed on the cross. ⁶ But he is not here. He has risen from death, as he said he would. Come and see the place where his body was. ⁷ And go quickly and tell his followers, ‘Jesus has risen from death. He is going into Galilee and will be there before you. You will see him there.’” Then the angel said, “Now I have told you.”

⁸ So the women left the tomb quickly. They were afraid, but they were also very happy. They ran to tell his followers what happened. ⁹ Suddenly, Jesus was there in front of them. He said, “Hello!” The women went to him and, holding on to his feet, worshiped him

Ideas for Prayers & Reflection

1) When things feel rubbish

Lots of you have seen us do this before; we call it 'Fizzy Forgiveness'. You need

- a clear, deep bowl or a vase you can see through filled with water
- some fizzy tablets. We use cheap vitamin tablets from a cheap shop like Home Bargains or B & M.



Now, put the vase/bowl on a surface where you can sit and look at it. Think about the things that are particularly rubbish today. It might be that you've had a big fight with someone, or that you are just feeling really sad.

Put the tablet into the water. It's going to bounce around and fizz like mad for a couple of minutes. That's what it's like for us sometimes. We can feel all anxious and churned up- our tummies can feel all shaking and uncomfortable, we might want to scream, or cry. Just like that tablet bouncing around and making chaos in the water.

Think about how you are feeling and then think about where God might be. In the Bible there are lots of clues that when we are feeling rubbish, God is right there with us. In the middle of the chaos he's there.

You might want to think about these words that God says:

- The Bible tells us that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God.
- Jesus says 'Come to me, if you are tired, or carrying a heavy burden, and I will refresh you'
- God says 'Do not be afraid, for I have saved you. I have called you by your name. You are mine. When you go through the waters they will not overwhelm you.'

You might want to say something as a prayer now...if you do, maybe these words will help.

'Father God, we thank you that even when things go wrong, and we have a difficult time, you promise to be with us. Help us to know you are with us in the turmoil, and thank you for helping us let go of our worries and problems. Amen.'

Have another look at the water...is it beginning to calm down? It will. It will become calm and still and go clear again (though it might end up orange or pink from the vitamin tablet!).

That happens for us too... things do settle down. Life does get sorted out. It's a promise, and something to hold onto....

2) Holding people in our thoughts

It's hard when we can't be with people we love. How about using pebbles, stones or marbles to think about each one today?

You will need:

A shallow dish or bowl of water

Some pebbles/marbles or stones, one for each person you are thinking about

Put the dish where you can sit by it. Then, take your things you have found and place them one by one into the water. As you place a pebble (or stone/marble) into the dish, name that person and watch the ripples spread to the edge of the dish.

You may also like to light a candle, and as you sit and reflect on its light, name those people out loud.

3) Doodling prayers

Begin with a sheet of paper and a single pen. Write down a name or a word which sums up a prayer for you today.

Perhaps the word is 'Peace'

Now draw around the word- the things and people you want to feel peace, or, if drawing isn't your thing, write around it. Maybe write the names of people and places you are thinking about today.

Continue this with other words- here are some which are good things to hope for people you care about:

Joy, happiness, laughter, hope, comfort, love

As you draw or write down the name of someone special to you, why don't you put your hand over the picture or the word, and think of them for a minute or two?

Here are some prayers which you may find helpful today:

Lord Jesus,
you told us to come to you if we are tired or carrying a heavy load.
I am here before you today.
I name before you my loved ones and my friends....
I ask today that you will bring rest to me
and to the people I have named. Amen

Dear Lord,
Be good to me;
The sea is so wide,
And my boat is so small. Amen.

4) Wool Prayers

Okay, so this one isn't so cool when there aren't that many of you in the same place, but I reckon if there are at least 3 of you this could work. (we've tried this in school, so you might remember...)

Sit down!

Start with 2 balls of wool (or string). Hold onto the end, and then throw the ball at someone else. When they catch it, they need to keep holding onto the thread and then throw the ball on to someone else....Don't let go! You should end up with both hands holding onto thread...

Soon you'll make a crazy web which you are all holding.

Now, think about the people sitting with you holding onto the web.

Think about the people who can't be there- your Grandad, or your Aunty or your best friend, maybe your teacher, or the person who babysits for you.

Imagine they are all caught up in this web that you've made.

As you hold the ends and corners of wool, call out the people you are thinking about. How about you say this prayer:

'Dear Lord, you hold the whole world in your hands. Remember today all the people we just named. Keep them safe, and help them to know you are with them, just like you are with us today. Amen.'

Now....let go! And someone gets to carefully wind those balls of wool back up for another day....

Home Church

What happens when...we just can't make it to church?!

You know what it's like, you're all set up to come to church, and then the baby's sick just as you're about to walk out of the door. Or you're tied in to Cricket/Rugby/Football, or visiting the relatives... and before you know it, you've missed church for weeks in a row.

Several years ago, after a run of colds, bad nights etc, we came up with a rather novel idea. When we couldn't get out to church we'd have a try at going to church at home! So here's our version of 'Home Church'... why not give it a go?

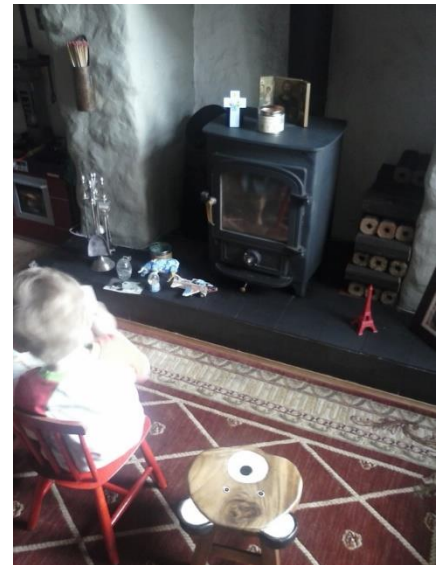
What do you need for Home Church?

This list is in the order our 5 year old gave me (he's 10 now, but that list still holds true):

- Candles
- Biscuits & Cake
- Sticker Books /Bible Story
- Cross
- Music

What happens next?

If you're at home, then you might want to structure things around the same pattern as they happen in church. For our son, this even meant being welcomed, shown to a seat and having biscuits afterwards!



Find a space – we've used the bedroom floor, the sitting room in front of the (unlit) woodburning stove, the garden. You can even put out chairs to sit on...

Make it feel special- light a candle, put a picture or a cross in prominent position.

Have a simple structure in your head to follow.

This one closely follows what we do in church:

- 1. We light our candle.** We sometimes sing a little song (you don't have to sing a song :~))
Jesus bids us shine with a pure, clear light,
Like a little candle, burning in the night.
In this world of darkness we must shine,
You in your small corner, and I in mine.'
- 2. Say hello to God and spend a moment thinking of anything that's been rubbish this week.** You know the kind of thing... you had a big fight at school (that's the kids, not the parents), the car got a parking ticket, the cat was sick on your favourite bedcover... Have a moment to say sorry, or to ask God to help make it all better. Maybe you could do Fizzy Forgiveness (see ideas for prayer & reflection)
- 3. Have a Bible story & chat.** We've used two different resources for this. One is a children's Bible where we've chosen our favourite story. One week it might be Christmas (in June), the next David and Goliath. Go with the flow. Ask the children what happens in the story, and talk about what the most important bit is.

The other resource is to get a themed book about a particular character. Some of them which we really enjoyed are big sticker books with a map in the back. Over several weeks you can look at different parts of the story of Jesus or Moses etc.



The collection here comes from the day when we read about the creation and reflects all of God's wonderful world. We raided both house and garden to find things that we love, and that God has given us, from flowers, to animals, to humans, light, stars, and technology.

4. **Prayer time.** What is prayer anyway? Talking to God and trying to listen to him, work out what he wants of us? We use two simple things...Saying 'Thank you' and saying 'Please'. In 'thank you' each of us says out loud something we want to thank God for. It might just be a sunny day, or the tooth fairy visiting, or that we love the new swing. You can say thank you for as long as you want.

Then say 'please'... 'Please God, remember/ be with/ look after/ the old lady on her own down the road/ me, because I have tummy ache/ my Granny in hospital/ the people who are hurt from the war... '

Then we end our prayers maybe with a set prayer we've learned, or would like to learn. The Lord's Prayer is something that almost everyone knows, or you can choose a small prayer that means something to you.

5. **Finally we end the Home Church service with an ending prayer.** It might be as simple as 'Dear God, bless us this week and keep us safe, Amen.'

Two other really important parts of Home Church in our house are:

Refreshments- usually in the form of biscuits or cake

Music- and charging around the room singing/waving flags/swords etc. We have a couple of favourites which we play on the ipod. We sometimes even have music 'before' church and while we're eating biscuits. Occasionally we sing along, especially if it is near Christmas and we've chosen a carol, or Hosanna on Palm Sunday or Thine be the Glory at Easter etc. You Tube/i-Tunes are great. We also particularly like having praise songs we can dance about to.

Home Church Outside - Here you can really make use of the environment. If you're on holiday by the sea, why not go for a 'holy walk' along the beach? (obviously, not at the moment- but one day soon we hope!) The same applies after a walk in the woods, or in your own garden. Pick up things that tell you of God's creation, that are beautiful or amazing. Make a collection- small children especially love this- and set them out to enjoy.

Talk about why they are precious... even a pebble or a shell can be stunning when you take time to look closely. And these things can then replace your candle, the discussion can replace your Bible story and chat- talk about God's amazing world and how he has given us so many beautiful things- ; and you can focus your prayer time around thanks for beautiful things and asking help for places/people where the world has been spoiled.

Of course you still need refreshments, so ice cream and a picnic can replace biscuits and cake!

And Finally...

Above all, remember why we're doing this. It's not to put a tick in the 'I've done church' box, but to say 'We've spent some time with God today.' And of course, you don't have to wait until Sunday- or even miss coming to church – to do that!

Let me know how you get on and send us some pics!

I can pray a rainbow...

Genesis 9 v 13

"I am putting my rainbow in the clouds as the sign of the agreement between me and the earth"



God placed a rainbow in the sky as a symbol of his promise to never again send a flood like the one that Noah had survived in the ark. Today the rainbow is a symbol of hope for us, a reminder that God keeps his promises. Here are some rainbow inspired activities for you and your family to explore together.

Rainbow prayer hunt

Go on a search around your house and try to find something of each of the colours below. Here is a prayer you can say for each colour as you find them.



RED

Thank you, God, that you love us and that you are always with us.



ORANGE

Dear God, please help us to be patient, to wait and listen to you and to be obedient while we wait for this crisis to end.



YELLOW

Dear God, please help all those who are scared. May they know your perfect peace that takes away all fear.



GREEN

Dear God, please look after all those who are sick, give them the treatment and help they need to recover, send your healing power into all the world.



BLUE

Dear God, please protect all those who are working for the NHS, thank you for all they are doing to protect us.



PURPLE

Thank you, God, that we are children of the King of Kings. Thank you that even though we are in difficult times we can trust in you and pray your Kingdom come.

PINK



Thank you, God, that we know you will bring us through this crisis to safety on the other side just as you protected Noah and brought him and his family through the flood.

Make an encouragement rainbow

You will need: Paper and pens or any other craft materials you have around the house

All around the country people are putting rainbows in their windows to encourage people in their street.

Use whatever craft materials you have in your house to decorate a rainbow and put it in your window where your neighbours can see it.



Some promises to share

Here are some more of God's promises from the Bible. Ask God who needs encouraging today and then send them a promise verse.

Joshua 1:9- Be strong and brave. Don't be afraid because the LORD your God will be with you everywhere you go.

Jeremiah 29:11 – "I say this because I know what I am planning for you," says the LORD, "I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future."

Mark 11:24 – So I tell you to believe that you have received the things you ask for in prayer, and God will give them to you.

Romans 8:28 – We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him.

