



An Overview of Resources

Back to School with God Sunday: the vision

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

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

The vision of Back to School with God is to:

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

We would encourage you to involve children and young people in the service wherever possible. You may also wish to invite representatives from local schools to your service.

Thank you for using our resources!

If you have any questions, please email Elizabeth.mcdowall@suscotland.org.uk or Rachel@sunico.uk.

What resources are provided?

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

Our core resource is the **BSG24 All-Age Service**, which can be tailored to your own situation. Various options are suggested for praise songs, opening activities, ways to tell the Bible story, response to the teaching, prayers for schools. We recognise that churches vary widely and aim to provide a resource that suits those with technology and those without. The service is provided in both pdf format and as a Word document so you can edit it as desired.

The **All-Age service** explores Luke 18:35-19:10. Jesus is in the community of Jericho and two lives are transformed: the blind beggar and Zacchaeus. Can we **spot the difference** in these two men's lives as they meet with Jesus? The congregation will be encouraged to think about this, about the difference Jesus has made in our lives, and how responding to him in the same way as the blind beggar and Zacchaeus might impact our schools and our community.

The 2024 all-age service includes two Bible stories, with the intention of comparing the difference Jesus made to two completely different people in one community, the community of Jericho. However if you feel it would be better to concentrate on one story, feel free to do so and adapt the material accordingly.

Key to the service is **prayer for schools**. Various options are given to pray for schools as part of the service and we recommend that this section is prioritized: we want our children, young people and school staff to go **Back to School with God**, prayed for and supported by the church family.

The following resources support the All-Age Service:

- **BSG24 All-age PPT Slides.** A set of PowerPoint slides to accompany the service, which includes a Spot the Difference activity, Bible reading and questions for discussion. Numbers in the all-age service outline refer to slides in this slide set. **Do check these before the service and remove the slides not required.** If you wish to print the all-age service to give to the tech team, remember to renumber them wherever necessary.
- **BSG24 Bible Characters.** Images of the blind beggar and Zacchaeus which can be printed onto A3 for those with no technology to display PPT slides. *Images are courtesy of www.LumoProject.com.*
- **BSG24 Children's Crafts & Prayer Activities.** Options for using with children at the side of the main service or in a separate Sunday group or midweek club.
- **BSG24 Magnifying Glass Printable.** A magnifying glass outline that can be copied for people to write prayers on. This is suggested in the all-age service as a follow-on activity after the **BSG24 Response PPT**.
- **BSG24 Prayer Stations.** Creative suggestions for providing four different prayer 'stations' around your church. Each relates to a verse from the Bible passage and leads to prayer for schools.
- **BSG24 Responsive Prayers for Schools.** Prayers led by different ages with a response from the congregation which can be printed and given to those taking part.
- **BSG24 Response PPT.** Different school-related images for people to reflect on how they can make a difference in different locations. Prayers can be written as a response: see **BSG24 Magnifying Glass Printable**.
- **BSG24 Spontaneous Drama.** An option for telling the Bible story using children or adults as Jesus, the blind beggar, Zacchaeus, and the crowd.
- **BSG24 SPOT Prayers.** An active prayer response that involves four individuals leading in prayer for children, young people, staff and schools using the letters S, P, O and T. Download and print coloured circles for children to find.

- **BSG24 Storytelling Script.** An option for telling the Bible story using props and two volunteers to play the blind beggar and Zacchaeus.
- **BSG24 Video Testimony.** 15-year-old pupil Susanna shares how Jesus has made a difference in her life and how she is seeking to share him with others in school.
- **BSG24 Word Version Editable.** The service outline in Microsoft Word, which can be used to tailor the service to your own needs.
- **BSG24 Zacchaeus Craft Labels.** Luke 19:6 in various colours ready to print, for any make of labels (24 to a page).

BEFORE your service

- If you are not the church leader, speak to the minister, leader or elders to seek permission to hold a *Back to School with God* service.
- Decide when you want to hold it. The service can be held on any Sunday around the start of a new school year, which will vary according to where you live. For the UK this will be any time from mid-August to mid-September.
- Decide on the length of service and select what you want to include. Approximate timings are given for each section.
- Print the **BSG24 All-Age Service pdf** or edit **BSG24 All-Age Service - Word** and **BSG24 All-Age PPT Slides**. Send the script and updated slide set to whoever operates the tech.
- Identify children, young people and adults willing to take part. You might like to ask children or young people to welcome people at the door. Volunteers are needed according to which activity, storytelling and prayer options are chosen. There is also an opportunity to invite someone to share a testimony. **BSG24 Responsive Prayers for Schools** and **BSG24 SPOT Prayers** could be emailed to those taking part ahead of the service.
- If you are using videos, check your church's licence allows them to be streamed live. If you are using videos from YouTube for public use, you need to be aware of copyright policy.
- If you are planning to take photographs or video of under 16s, make sure you have permission from parents to do so – particularly if you plan to share on social media.
- You might like to consider taking a special offering for a local project, e.g. to purchase gifts for local schools, or your own youth work.

You might also like to consider supporting the following organisations who have been involved in writing **Back to School with God** resources, who work in schools and promote schools' prayer.

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

AFTER your Service

Feedback: We appreciate you using our resources! We normally contact participants in the autumn to ask for general feedback and things we could improve on. We love to hear how your congregation received them, to what extent children and young people engaged with them, and any comments or suggestions you have for next year's resources. If you would like to get in touch with your own stories and photos, email Elizabeth.McDowall@suscotland.org.uk.

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

Bless pupils and teachers: At the start of a new school year, you may like to hand in a box of treats such as chocolates, biscuits or cakes to the school office to encourage staff at the start of this new term; donate socks or underwear for younger pupils as these are often needed; donate schoolbags or pencil cases for children who have none.

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

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

Serving Schools: Offering support will be a blessing and strengthen your church's relationship with schools. For ideas see [Serve your Local School](#) (Scotland) or [CVE Scotland](#) (for chaplains). In England, check out [Reality Youth Project](#), [Christian Values in Education](#) or find about becoming a local Faith Guide with [Scripture Union](#).

If you'd like support or resourcing to help your church build and strengthen relationships in a local context, or would like to find out more about blessing a school by leading a Scripture Union group in it, please get in touch as follows:

- **Scotland:** find and email your SU Scotland Regional or Associate Worker on the [website](#) or email regional@suscotland.org.uk.
- **Northern Ireland:** email info@suni.co.uk for advice.
- **England:** find and connect with your local Scripture Union team by filling out the contact form on the [Scripture Union website](#).