



Scripture Union

LIGHT PARTY

‘The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.’

John 1:5

INSIDE

- Crafts, games and discussion ideas
- Halloween: do we ignore it or respond to it?
Rich Powney, Evangelical Alliance
- Top tips from Children’s Advisor
Sharon Pritchard

**2017
PACK**

Hello

.....



Did you know 50% of Australian families with children actively celebrate Halloween?¹ Halloween is increasingly featured in shops and TV, so it's easy to understand the attraction to children and families. Often as Christians we're disturbed by this trend and uncertain about engaging with this emerging festivity.

Scripture Union is here to help! Halloween offers a fantastic opportunity for families to discover that Jesus is the Light of the World. Light Parties have already been successfully sharing this Light in the UK. This free pack will help show you how to do this in your community. And remember, if your church can't do it alone you can run a combined event with other churches in your area.

We have tested Light Parties in an Australian context, and they have been hugely successful in connecting churches with their local community. Scripture Union is committed to helping the church reach the next generation, and this resource complements other work of Scripture Union: partnering with churches to share the Good News about Jesus, holiday programs, community missions, Bible reading programs, and more.

So don't be spooked by Halloween! Share the Light of the World, and however you express your Light Party, we hope you have a great time.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Justin Simpson'.

Justin Simpson, Acting Chair, Scripture Union Australia

P.S. If you run a Light Party we'd love to hear your stories of how it worked in your community!

GOULBURN CELEBRATES THE LIGHT

After returning from England and seeing the great outreach that was happening through the Scripture Union Light Parties in churches there, we wanted to start one here in Goulburn. For the past two years several local churches have connected to run a Light Party. Last year over 300 people attended, many of them families who don't usually attend church.

Having volunteers from a range of churches, involved in all sorts of ways, created a great environment and atmosphere for the children and adults.

Brian & Alison Champness
Directors of Families and Children's Ministry
Anglican Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn

What do they do at Goulburn Light Party?

Our Light Party is a fun and safe alternative to Halloween where families can come and take part in activities such as sport, games, a disco, jumping castle, craft, face painting or they can relax in the café with some home-made treats or enjoy a sausage sizzle.

To finish off everyone comes together in the church for a puppet show and a fancy dress parade with prizes for the best dressed Super Heroes and Princesses!



¹McCrindle Research, 2011

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What next with Scripture Union?

**LOOK OUT
FOR THE POSTERS
AND INVITATIONS
IN THE CENTRE OF
THIS PACK!**



Visit www.scriptureunion.org.au/lightparties for even more information and resources.

Halloween: do we ignore it or respond to it?

By Rich Powney

My main memory of Halloween growing up was that, as a family, we didn't get involved. My parents were Christians and they made the decision that going trick or treating was not for us. I didn't particularly mind as a kid because I hated getting dressed up, even though I would have enjoyed getting some sweets and chocolate!



A fair few years have passed since I was a kid, and the popularity of Halloween in Australia has exploded. In my view, it's no longer something that can simply be ignored. Whilst we may understandably have some reservations about engaging with Halloween due to all the ghosts, witches and demons on display, the reality is that most people taking their kids out trick or treating are not deliberately entering into pagan worship – they just want to have some fun. Halloween has become one of the few occasions when strangers are welcomed at people's doors, neighbours go visiting each other's houses and a sense of community is developed. In short, it's become a great opportunity for connecting with our communities.

So it's been fantastic to see many churches respond by putting on Light Parties. These events are

an excellent way to engage with Halloween and with people in our communities who normally wouldn't come along to church. However, as with any church activity, a Light Party can easily become a party full of Christian parents and their children. How can we ensure that we avoid this all-too-easy pitfall and make the most of this opportunity?

Firstly, it's important to be intentional in how the event is advertised in your church. When telling people in the church about the Light Party, be explicit that this event is an opportunity to invite families in the community. Why not take this upcoming event as an opportunity to do some equipping with the whole church family in how to talk about Jesus with others? The Light Party gives a good opportunity to put into practice some of the concepts you've been covering.

At the same time, take the opportunity to begin or continue equipping the children in your church to be witnesses to their friend Jesus. You could take some time to look at passages like the great commission in Matthew 28 or Jesus' final words in Acts 1:8. Use these passages as foundations to chat through the idea that not everyone is a follower of Jesus. Many of their friends won't know Jesus yet, but at the Light Party we have a chance to help them find out more about what it means to be a friend of Jesus.

Secondly, think about how you are going to advertise the Light Party in the community. The most common way for people to come to an event is by being invited by someone who they know. So again, encourage and equip the families in your church to chat with their family, friends and neighbours. For more ideas on



‘These events are an excellent way to engage with Halloween and with people in our communities who normally wouldn’t come along to church’

promotion check out Sharon’s top tips on page 6 and Helen’s article on page 10.

and that the darkness has not overcome him.

This pack is full of great ideas on how to plan and run a Light Party, but in the busyness of doing this, don’t forget to think about what’s next. If there are families who come along to your event who normally have no connection with your church, or are on the fringes, what can you do to ensure that relationship is grown and developed? Check out page 10 for some ideas.

Finally, while it’s important to put effort into putting on an excellent event, we need to be praying that on this night, of all nights, people are attracted to the light and away from the darkness.

So get the whole church praying that people will come and celebrate the Light who shines in the darkness

Rich is married to Kit. Having become a Christian in his early 20s, he’s passionate about helping people explore what it means to be a follower of Jesus. He recently graduated with a Masters in Theology. Currently he works in the Unity for Mission team at the Evangelical Alliance.

Rich is sports mad and loves watching and trying to play pretty much all sport. To relax you’ll often find Rich and Kit enjoying the outdoors – preferably up a mountain!

**ABOUT
THE AUTHOR**



Top tips for your Light Party

By Sharon Pritchard

START EARLY

The 31st October may seem like light years away when we're shivering through winter but this is the ideal time to start thinking about your Light Party. Share, or find a vision for your Light Party, think about your community and how it might work, and pray. The earlier you start with planning, the more effective your whole planning process will be.



CHOOSE WISELY

Team: Gathering a team of like-minded, capable volunteers is essential to running a Light Party. If you have regular volunteers you should start there – but this may be an opportunity to encourage others to be involved, and a one-off event such as this may be easier to commit to for some. Encourage any youth you may have in your church to be involved too.

Venue: Make sure you choose a venue that is suitable for your Light Party – your church with fixed pews may not be the most practical of spaces. Think about using a community centre as a venue – this will help to put people at ease about coming along. It's a much less threatening venue and it will give your Light Party a great presence in your community. You may even have access to a school hall to hold your Light Party in – you could always offer to run your Light Party as an alternative to Halloween for a school. This may give you large numbers of children attending but what a witness your Light Party could be in your community!

Ethos: Decide on what your Light Party will actually look like; will it be activities and games, crafts and mess or music and dancing? Will there be food? These factors might depend on the number of volunteers you have to make this happen, the venue for the party and what resources/funding you have in place. A clear plan of action will help with creating a Light Party that will work in your context.

Date: Light Parties work best when they are a true alternative to Halloween; therefore it's important that you try your best to hold your party on or close to 31st October. Making the best of the time you have will ensure your party's success.

PLANNING

Planning is essential – it needs to be timely, thoughtful and thorough! You need to take into account every possibility you can and make sure you remember the finer details. Consider the age range of the children you may have attending your Light Party, how many volunteers you will need and who will be responsible for each element of your party.

What resources will you need? It's a good idea to schedule a few planning meetings with your team; checking how it is progressing leading up to your event can often aid the process as sometimes we're good at working towards a deadline! Make sure at least one of your meetings is in the actual venue you'll be using for your Light Party itself. It's no good sitting in someone's living room wondering if you can fit 50 people into the local hall.

Plan your event in the venue, scope out where things will go and what will work best. Sometimes a flexible venue can shape the activities you are able to have at your party; for instance, a sports hall will enable you to plan games, large activities and lots of variety.



FUNDING

Please don't be tempted to charge for attending your Light Party – events like this should always be a gift from the church to, for and with the community. You may need to fundraise to run your party, or ask your church council for a set amount as a budget. Try to borrow resources that may be expensive like sports equipment; sometimes you can borrow larger items from a school or youth centre and this will help keep running costs to a minimum.

PUBLICITY

Publicising your Light Party is key to making it a success. It's a good idea to create a flyer which can be given out in your church and the wider community. You may want to attach a consent form to each flyer (if parents aren't going to be present). Posters and flyers could be given out to be displayed in local shops, doctors', dentists' and vets' surgeries – wherever there are people. Posters displayed at your chosen venue are also effective. You may also want to ask children who are part of your church to invite their friends along. Advertising your event on social media can also be a good way of getting your information out there to the wider community.

RESOURCES

Of course, you'll need this pack to help you to plan and run your Light Party, but there will undoubtedly be other items you need for your party. As mentioned earlier try to borrow resources where you can, otherwise try to keep within your set budget for the items that you need. You may be able to recycle some of the items you have at home or in your cupboard at church. Be creative in how you use resources and share ideas, and look for new ways of using everyday items.

You may be surprised with what you can come up with.

CHILD PROTECTION

You must ensure that child protection is in place for your event. The following should be used as guidelines:

- 1 If volunteers don't have a current background check you must obtain these before your event. Follow any volunteer policy you have in place at your church.
- 2 Ensure you have enough volunteers for your party to run the activities you have planned.
- 3 Check that you have first-aid provision in place for your event.
- 4 Make yourself aware of the safety policies of your venue: fire exits, appropriate use of facilities etc.
- 5 Complete a risk assessment of your activities and ask your venue for their own building risk assessment if they have one.

6 Make sure you are adequately insured for your Light Party.

7 Register each person who attends your party – a signing-in sheet is a good way of keeping a record of who is attending.

AND FINALLY...

Pray, go for it and enjoy!

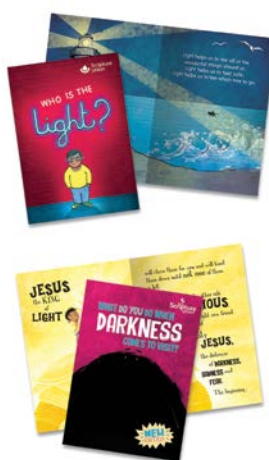
Sharon is the Children's Adviser for the Anglican Church and has been in post for five years. She offers training, support, resources and advice to parishes in the diocese on all aspect of Children's Ministry. Sharon collects nativities and loves all things Christmas!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



www.scriptureunion.org.au/lightparties

Visit our website for access to **FREE** downloads including extra party ideas, hints and tips, downloadable posters and invitations, sample health and safety forms and much more.



Who Is The Light? (5 to 8s) and *What Do You Do When Darkness Comes To Visit?* (8 to 11s) are booklets with a narrative that presents Jesus as the light of the world and how those who follow him are called to be light too. These are ideal to give to the children who attend your Light Party, church service, or who come trick or treating.

'The Light Party resources were great, particularly the booklets. We sent each child away with one in a party bag. One lady from the church brought along a child she was looking after that night as part of a family support charity- the little 9 year old apparently read the booklet out loud her herself in the back of the car on the way home. Lovely to have such precious seeds sown.' – **Light Party host**

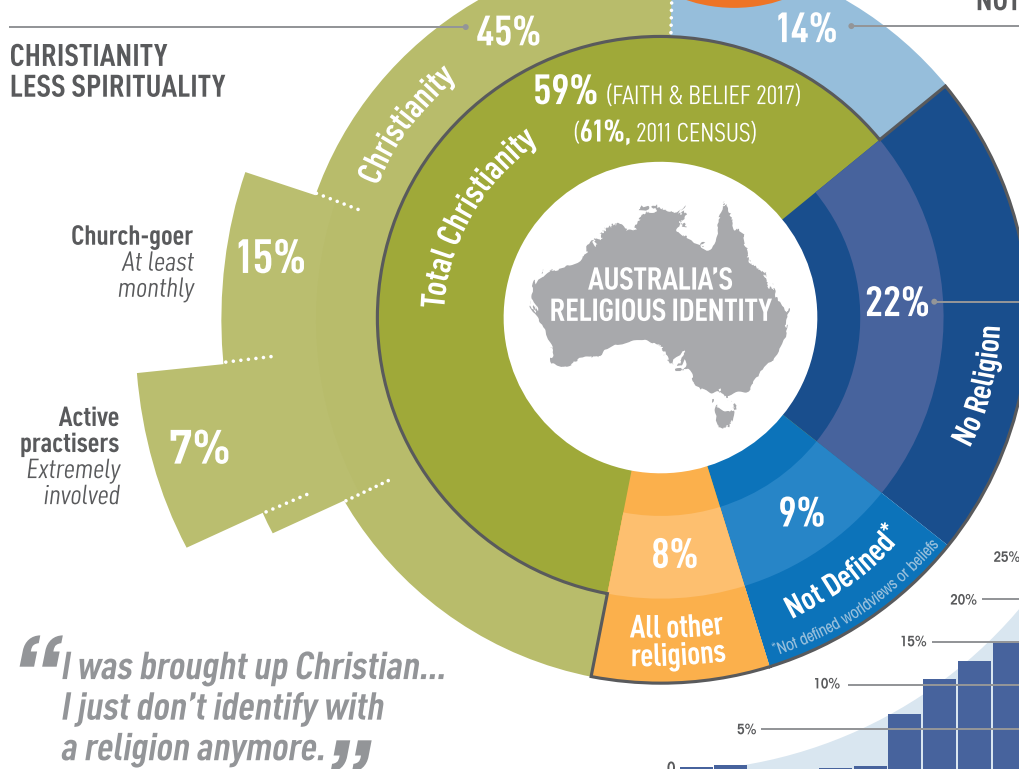
Priced at \$25.95 for a pack of 10.

Available from Resources for Ministry
www.rfmshop.com.au

FAITH AND BELIEF IN AUSTRALIA DEFINED

WHAT IS THE STATE OF FAITH IN AUSTRALIA?

CHRISTIANITY LESS SPIRITUALITY



"I was brought up Christian... I just don't identify with a religion anymore."

*When given a 'spiritual but not religious' option, 14% of 'Total Christianity' moves to this new category.

THE JOURNEY TO (AND FROM) BELIEF

55% of Australians talk about spirituality or religion at least occasionally

OFTEN 9%

OCCASIONALLY 46%

NEVER 4%

AUSTRALIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY

1 in 4 warm (24%)

1 in 8 neutral (12%)

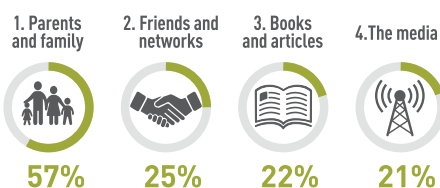
1 in 4 cool (26%)

"Religion gives hope but causes friction."



Modified Engel Scale

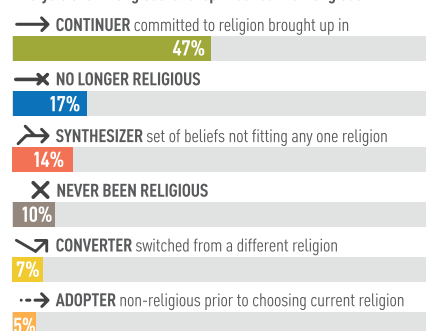
GREATEST INFLUENCES ON OPINIONS OF CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY



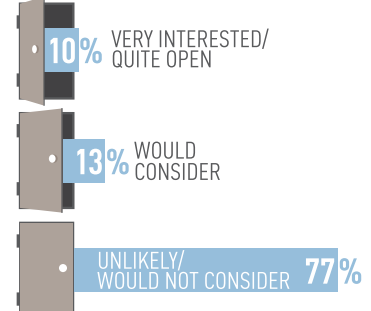
Internet and social is #3 for Gen Z (24% compared to 14% overall)

OUTGROWING RELIGION?

Analysis of all 'religious' and 'spiritual but not religious'



NON-CHRISTIANS' OPENNESS TO EXPLORING RELIGION



PERCEPTIONS OF RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY

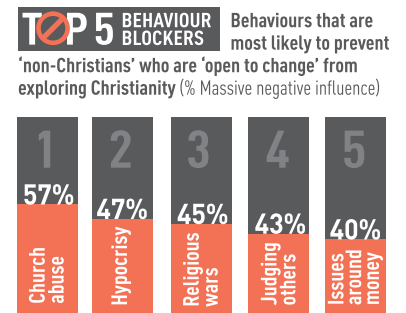
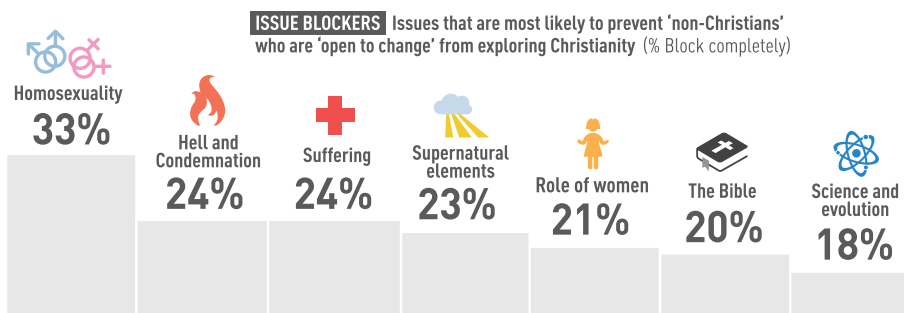


TOP 10 PERCEPTIONS OF CHRISTIANS

92% of Australians know at least one Christian. They see Christians as:

41%	Caring
35%	Loving
35%	Kind
32%	Honest
31%	Faithful
25%	Traditional
20%	Judgemental
18%	Old-fashioned
18%	Opinionated
17%	Hypocritical

BELIEF BLOCKERS



THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA



"I don't have that religious support system. There must be a lot of comfort in that. I envy that."

HOW MUCH DO AUSTRALIANS KNOW ABOUT THE CHURCH GENERALLY?



HOW WELL DO AUSTRALIANS KNOW THE CHURCH LOCALLY?



PERCEIVED IMPACT OF CHURCHES IN THEIR AREA



"When all else fails, the church will be there."

Quotes provided in this infographic are from focus groups conducted with non-Christians.

METHODOLOGY:

A national survey of Australians n=1024. Research conducted January 2017. Australian public data is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. McCrindle conducted three focus groups (Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) during March 2017. Full report at faithandbelief.org.au

Commissioned by:

OLIVETREE MEDIA

MTS

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

CMAA

Research and report by:

mccrindle

PERCEPTIONS OF JESUS



"There is nothing negative about him; he was a very moral person. So many good traits there, if he does exist."

1 in 29
Australians have never heard of Jesus

HOW MUCH DO AUSTRALIANS KNOW ABOUT JESUS' LIFE?



HOW IMPORTANT WAS/IS JESUS' LIFE TO...



THE POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES OF JESUS' LIFE

50%	Love	29%	Wisdom
39%	Hope	29%	Non-violent
34%	Care	27%	Salvation
34%	Truth	25%	Grace
30%	Strength	25%	Freedom



Reaching beyond church children

By Helen Franklin

It's estimated that a staggering 85% of Australians aren't in church.

So how are all those people going to hear the good news of Jesus? We certainly can't wait for them to step through our church doors. We need to step out and take the good news to them – to meet them where they are!

Light Parties are a fantastic way to give the children and young people in your community the opportunity to hear about God's love for them. We asked Helen Franklin, Scripture Union Development Worker to share her advice on how to do this...

1 Get the children who already come to your activities involved in planning the Light Party. Talk through the suggestions in the pack and let them help you choose what you will do so that they are happy with what is planned and therefore more likely to invite friends to the party. That includes deciding if you want to make this just for a specific age group, or a party for families to come to together.

2 Plan the absolute best party you can! Adults not involved in church may have low expectations; wouldn't it be great if their child went home and said this had been the best party they had ever been to?!

Do you have anyone in your church who could do something special for the party that the children would really enjoy? For example, if you plan to play any games with music, could your worship band come and play live instead of you using pre-recorded music?

3 Get the children involved in praying for the party. Help them to understand that this is not just about having fun on or around 31st October, but that it is helping to introduce their friends to Jesus the Light of the World.

To explain the impact Jesus can have, darken the room as much as possible and ask them what makes the world feel dark. Let them list the things they recognise. Light one candle. Pause and look at it, at how it affects the darkness. Talk about Jesus the Light of the World and the difference he made when he came into the world. Talk about the difference he can make in the specific 'darkness' they have named. Light a tea light from the candle, and then another, and so on, so they get the picture of how every extra light lightens the room still

further... and bringing their friends to the party helps to spread the Light. In the candlelight, pray for Jesus to use each of you as his light. If possible, give each child a battery-powered tea light to take home as a reminder to pray for the party and for the friends they might invite to it.

Ask your church to pray too, and create a prayer card for each person to remind them of the details.

4 Give every child a number of invitations to pass on to friends, just as they would if this were their own party. That way all the details are written down clearly, and it's much easier than simply asking by words. Make sure it's clear that this is a Christian party. Include a contact phone number or email address so a parent could check on details if they have questions.

5 Make sure you also invite any other children or young people who come to activities – but not to a Sunday group – at the church, such as uniformed organisations, dance groups etc. If you have a toddler group, give invitations to any parents with older children in the right age group. You might want to invite children who live on the road where your church is. But rather than just put a flyer through letterboxes, knock at the door, explain you're from the church and ask if there are any children living there. If there are, don't just hand an invitation to a child but ask to speak to their parent too; that's much better practice.

But remember that you have to be able to cope with the numbers of children who come, which includes having enough food, enough leaders, enough space, being safe etc.

6 Children outside church may want to come in costumes you would prefer they didn't wear. But rather than say 'Please don't...' – which may just enforce views that church is all about telling you what you can't

do – encourage them to come dressed in a particular way. And if someone does happen to come dressed as a witch or ghost, just ignore it if possible rather than make a fuss: help children to feel welcome.

7 Do something for the parents. If your party is going to run over a relatively short time, is there anything that other people in church could do for parents at the same time but in a different part of the building, such as serving coffee and desserts, cheese tasting, pampering etc. so that they don't have to go home and come back? Think out of the box to make this easy for parents to bring their children.

8 Create a welcoming atmosphere. On the night, make sure any rooms you will use are nicely warm but not too hot. People are easily put off by a cold church! Make it obvious where the party is with signs or even sticky plastic footprints showing the way from the footpath to the door. If the room that you'll be in is a distance from the main door, have someone at the first entrance who can welcome people, direct them to the right place, explain where toilets are (there's nothing worse than having to ask as soon as you get there!) and saying a friendly 'goodbye' as parents leave. Make sure they are clued up on plans for the evening so they can answer any queries that parents have. If parents feel happy with the way you welcome them and look after their children they are more likely to bring them again.

9 Keep praying! Have people from church who will pray for the party as it's happening.

10 What happens next? See Ali Campbell's article '7 ways to keep in touch' on page 28 for ideas on what to do after your Light Party to keep on reaching out to the children and young people that attended.

Best of all would be to have events planned every 2-3 months all through the year, so that by the time next year's party happens, these children are so comfortable with church that they become the ones doing the inviting. You never know what might happen, because God is at work!

Helen is an Scripture Union Church and Community Development worker. She is passionate about mission and has pioneered our 'Pop up Mission' model of simple mission including Summer Salt and Star at the Stable that have introduced thousands of children to something of the Christian Story.



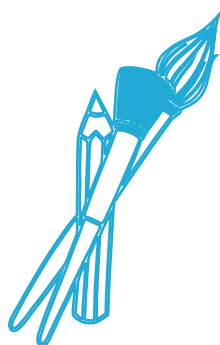
**ABOUT
THE AUTHOR**

ACTIVITIES



Enjoy all the great activities in these pages but try to steer people back to this awesome truth: that God brings light to his world!

Let there be light



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The theme of this Light Party Pack is 'Let there be light'. Through the games, craft, activities and session plans, we aim to help children, young people and families discover that God is the source of light and life. We explore the story of creation, where light is the first thing that God speaks into being. We discover that we are a 'very good' part of God's creation and that we are made in his image. We also think about how Jesus is the Light for the World and how we can take that light into our communities by what we say, how we act and the way we treat others.

GETTING STARTED

The next few pages contain all the activities and ideas you'll need to put together your Light Party event.

If you haven't already, take a look at pages 6 and 9, for Sharon's great 'Top tips for Your Light Party' article.

The poster and invitations overleaf are designed for you to cut out and photocopy. They are also available to download at www.scriptureunion.org.au/lightparties



YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR LIGHT PARTY



ON

AT



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ACTIVITIES



SETTING UP YOUR SPACE

First impressions count, so make sure you make your venue as welcoming as possible. Even something as simple as hanging fairy lights all over your space can make such a difference. It can create a sense of excitement and declare that this is a special event.

If you can use other decorations, then make the effort to create an extra-special space. Have different sources and colours of light throughout your venue – there may be people in your congregation who can lend you various special lights, such as bubble towers, fibre-optic lights or disco lighting.

Make sure you have a good number of volunteers ready to welcome children, young people and families at the entrance to your venue. If you're hoping to reach families not part of your church community, then your visitors are unlikely to be familiar with your building or know where to go. Help people find the different parts of the building, such as your main meeting room, the toilets etc.

As well as the spaces where the children and young people are going to be, think about setting up an area for parents and carers. If possible, provide comfy chairs and quality refreshments (real coffee, homemade cake etc) for parents and carers to use while the event is taking place. Make sure you have a couple of volunteers in this space, to serve refreshments and chat to parents and carers.



Make sure you have a good number of volunteers ready to welcome children, young people and families at the entrance to your venue.



SERVING FOOD

Food is a great part of any event, and you will probably want to give children or young people some refreshments. Make sure that you follow food-hygiene guidelines and are aware of any allergies. Be ready to supply people with a list of ingredients and allergens.

Snacks

If you only have the facilities for snacks, then put together platters of fruit of assorted colours. Keep to the creation theme by having animal crackers or other plant- and animal-shaped food. Provide water, fruit juice or even hot drinks such as hot chocolate.

Pizzas

If you have more time, you could help children or young people make their own pizzas. Simple pizza dough recipes can be found online, or you can buy ready-made pizza bases. Provide lots of toppings for the children or young people to choose from and then cook and enjoy your pizzas together!

Bonfire treats

If you're having a bonfire party, then serve sausages, with onions and sauce. Burgers are also a popular option. You could have other bonfire-night treats, such as marshmallows, or damper.

Other ideas

Providing homemade cakes and biscuits is always a winner. Are there any people in your congregation who would be willing to bake for you, even if they can't volunteer to help out at the event itself? Coordinate your bakers so that you can provide a range of treats, and make sure you have a gluten-free option.

Simple platters of fruit and salad vegetables can work well. You could make hummus, raita or tzatziki with the children/young people that you can then serve with carrot and celery sticks.

Play with the idea of light by making jelly in different coloured layers!

ACTIVITIES



LIGHT EVENTS

You might wish to focus your light event on one big activity. Here are some suggestions that work well in this context. You can always do these activities on a smaller scale, to sit alongside some of the other great ideas in this pack.

Light disco



You will need: music and the means to play it, disco lights, glow sticks, quiet room facilities (such as bean bags, subdued lighting, books, refreshments)

Before the event, set up your disco space. Make sure you tape cables securely down and everything is safe for the children or young people to move around in limited lighting. Set up a quiet room where people can go to escape the noise and take some time out if they need it. Plan where you and your fellow leaders are going to be – you'll need at least a couple of leaders each in the disco and quiet spaces. Get the children's or young people's help in choosing the music, so that everyone is happy to dance.

As the children or young people arrive, give out glow sticks to add to the atmosphere. Make people aware that they can take some time out in the quiet space if they need to. It might take a while for everyone to start dancing, but things should get going after a couple of songs!



Light drama nigh



You will need: lyrics to songs about light (include faith-based songs as well as pop songs), light props (such as torches, lamps, glow sticks and battery-powered candles)

A drama event can be a great way to build relationships and get everyone talking. You can have a strong Christian theme to these activities or keep things low key. Start with a warm-up game or two. Try Splat! Stand the group in a circle, with one person in the middle. This person turns on the spot and then points to someone in the circle. That person should duck, while the people either side of them point at each other and shout 'Splat!' The last of these two to point and shout is out. However, if anyone gets anything wrong (the person doesn't duck, or someone else in the circle shouts 'Splat!' by accident), they are out. Keep going until there are just two people left. Stand these two back to back. On the word 'go', they walk five steps away from each other, turn, point and shout 'Splat!'. The first one to do so is the winner.

Give out copies of the lyrics you have chosen. Split the group into pairs or threes and challenge them to come up with a scenario where the dialogue is completely made up of the lyrics to their song. Move between the groups to give help and suggestions as necessary. When everyone is ready, have fun watching the different scenarios.

Split the group into different smaller teams and give each team a few light props. Challenge them to come up with a scenario that uses all their props. They don't have to use them as they would normally be used – they could come up with a new purpose for them! Once everyone has finished, perform the short dramas to the rest of the group.



Social action



You will need: pens and paper

Making a difference in your local community can be a powerful formative experience for young people. And, if you're working with young people who are Christians, then it can also be a great faith-building tool. How can we take the light of God out into our community?

Before your event, research some social action opportunities in your area. It might be that you can get involved in a project that is already happening, or you could come up with projects that your group could start. These could involve changing your local environment, getting involved with work with older people or helping out at food banks. Try to come up with three or four possibilities.

Present your possibilities to the group and ask them to choose one that they'd like to get involved with. Once you have decided on one, work together on that project, deciding what you want to do and how you're going to do it. Write up all your ideas and then come up with a final plan of action.

Get permission from parents/guardians for your plans. Make sure you risk assess anything that takes you out of your church building, and keep to your church's child protection policy at all times. Then put your project into action!

Light film-making



You will need: film-making equipment (such as video cameras or smartphones), different light sources, permission from parents/carers for children and young people to be filmed, large sheets of paper and marker pens, simple video-editing software

Explain to the group that you're going to create some films about light. Write 'Let there be light' on a large sheet of paper and brainstorm some ideas around that phrase that you could base your film on. Once individuals have given their suggestions, select one or two to develop further using a different sheet of paper for each idea.

Help the group plan out their chosen idea. You could create some storyboards so that you can imagine each shot and understand what you have to do to create each part of the film.

Once everything is planned out, decide who is going to do what; for example, camera operators, actors, a director, light and sound technicians. Film your piece and then set about editing. You might have time to do this in your session. If not, then you could either edit the video as part of your regular group's time, or you could do it yourself and show the finished film at a special premiere night!

Bonfire



You will need: a large outdoor space, firewood, refreshments (see page 15 for suggestions), risk assessment, appropriate insurance, and permission from the fire brigade

Having a bonfire party can be a big draw for children, young people and families. It is a big undertaking – you will need to risk assess the event, put in the appropriate safety measures and ensure you have the correct insurance – however, it will be a memorable event for those who attend, and so will be worth the effort.

Your local Fire Brigade will have lots of help and advice for you so you know where to start. Follow their guidance when planning bonfires. Have a contingency plan for if it rains or there is a fire ban – you might want to set out some of the craft and games (pages 18 to 22) inside.

ACTIVITIES



CRAFT AND CONSTRUCTION

LARGE CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

Do these together and enjoy the scale and size of a giant construction project!

Lighthouse



You will need: boxes, gaffer tape, a weight (such as a bag of sand), coloured paper, glue, sticky tape, scissors, paint and paintbrushes, a large torch or lantern, a clear plastic cylinder (such as the tub for small sweets like flying saucers), clean-up and cover-up equipment

Build the tower of the lighthouse out of boxes, sticking them together with gaffer tape. Then stick coloured paper all over the tower (it might be easier to lie the tower on its side to do this). Let the children choose the colours they'd like to use. You could create stripes or a patchwork effect.

Pull the tower upright and place your large torch or lantern on the top. Cover with the plastic cylinder and tape securely to the tower. You might want to carefully cut a door in the plastic cylinder to enable you to turn the torch/lantern on and off.

Decorate the lighthouse using the paint, maybe creating ivy and flowers up the sides, or even an outside staircase and lighthouse keeper.

As you work, chat about light and about what it helps us to do. What does a lighthouse do? If appropriate, talk about the different references to light in the Bible – what do any of those mean to you? Share your story with the children/young people.

As you work, chat about light and about what it helps us to do. What does a lighthouse do?

Solar system



You will need: round paper lanterns and/or polystyrene balls of different sizes, a large yellow balloon, paint and paintbrushes, a large outdoor space, pictures of different planets, coloured card, scissors and sticky tape

Show the group the pictures of the different planets in our solar system. Wonder at the different colours, moons and the brightness of the sun. Challenge everyone to make their own planet or moon, so that you can put together the solar system. Using paper lanterns and/or polystyrene balls, paint them different colours to represent different planets. If children want to add rings to their planet, cut circles from card and stick them around the equator of their planet.

Once the planets are dry, blow up the large yellow balloon to represent the sun. With each child/young person holding their planet, go outside and arrange your solar system. With the balloon sun at the centre, place the planets so that they move away from the sun. Encourage your planets to go around the sun, and moons to go around their planets.

As you 'perform' your solar system, talk about how the sun brings light to the Earth. What is the sun's light like on other planets? How did all these planets get here in the first place?



SMALLER CRAFT

Firework pictures



You will need: black paper, brightly coloured paint, paintbrushes, cheap toothbrushes, clean-up and cover-up equipment

Give everyone a sheet of black paper and challenge them to create a firework display using the bright colours of paint you have provided. The group can use paintbrushes to paint or flick the paint on the paper, or toothbrushes to spray finer drops of paint onto their picture. Make sure you cover up the floor and surfaces well!

Once everyone has finished, admire the pictures you have created and chat about how the light shines in the darkness.

Light song pictures



You will need: art materials, paper, the lyrics to songs about light (both faith-based and pop songs)

Share the lyrics to the songs that you have brought with you. If you have recordings of the tracks and can play those, let the group listen to them too. Give out paper and art materials and challenge the children or young people to create a picture that illustrates or is inspired by the lyrics to one or more of the songs.

As you work, chat about why individuals have chosen certain songs. What was it about their song that attracted them to it?

When everyone has finished, show the pictures and, if anyone would like to, share the motivation behind them.

Models of creation



You will need: modelling clay, paint and paintbrushes, clean-up and cover-up equipment

If you have explored the creation story, then this is a good craft to follow that up. Give everyone a piece of modelling clay and ask them to sculpt something from the story of creation that they remember or that stuck in their minds.

Allow space for people to create their models, chatting with them if they wish. Once everyone has finished, dry the sculptures out according to the instructions on the packet. If you have time, paint the models.

Stained-glass biscuits



You will need: biscuit dough, boiled sweets, rolling pins, round biscuit cutters (one roughly 10 cm, one 3 cm), baking sheets, baking paper, access to a kitchen

Preheat your oven to 180 °C/gas mark 4. To make the biscuits, buy ready-made dough or, if you have more time, you can make the dough together. Try this recipe: cream together 250 g butter and 140 g caster sugar. Mix in one egg yolk and 2 teaspoons vanilla extract. Stir in 300 g plain flour to make a dough. Use more flour if the dough is very sticky.

Line your baking sheets with paper. Roll out the dough and cut out circles using the larger cutter. Turn the circles into rings by cutting the centre out with the smaller cutter. Place the rings on the baking sheets. Bash up the boiled sweets with a rolling pin and put the small pieces inside the rings of dough.

Bake in the oven for 15 minutes or until golden and the sweets have melted in the middle. Leave on the tray until cool and then peel off the paper. The sweets should have formed a 'stained glass' effect. Look through the holes and wonder at the different colours of light!

Shadow puppets



You will need: thin card, pencils, scissors, split pins, straws, sticky tape; a white sheet, a light source

On the card, show the children or young people how to draw the different parts of a simple person. You'll need a head and body, two upper arms and two lower arms, two upper legs and two lower legs. Cut out the different parts and join them together using split pins. Tape the top of a straw to the back of the body, and the end of a straw to one of the arms. If you have more than one person operating a puppet, you can attach straws to the other limbs.

Hang a white sheet between two posts (volleyball or badminton net posts are ideal) and place your light source behind it. When the light is turned on, you can use the puppets to cast shadows on the sheet – move the puppets around to create scenarios!

If you have the facilities, show the group some (appropriate) videos from the internet about shadow puppets.

ACTIVITIES



LIGHT EXPERIMENTS



Giant bubbles



You will need: bubble mixture (shop-bought or a homemade version made up of 160 ml washing-up liquid, 1 tbsp glycerine and 3.8 litres of water), a wire coat hanger, a large tray (with a rim greater than 3 cm)

Put the bubble mixture into the tray. Bend the wire coat hanger into a hoop and dip it into the mixture, then move the hoop through the air. You should get a large bubble! Watch the colours of light play across the surface of the bubble. Who can make the largest bubble? (Tip: if you're making your own mixture, make it the day before – this makes better bubbles!)

See around corners



You will need: two 1 litre Tetra Pak cartons (such as fresh fruit juice or soya milk cartons), two hand mirrors, gaffer tape, scissors

Cut the triangular tops off the cartons and then tape them together with the gaffer tape, open end to open end. Cut one hole across the bottom front and one across the top back of the taped-together cartons. Push one mirror through the bottom hole and tape it at an angle, so that when you look at it, you can see up the tube. Do the same with the second mirror in the top hole, this time angled so that you can see down the tube.

Now, by looking through the bottom hole, you should be able to see out of the top hole. You can use these to see over walls or around corners. Have fun peering over and around things. Talk about how the light reflects off both mirrors and into your eyes.

Make your own sunset



You will need: a clear container (something like a small fish tank would be ideal), water, 50 ml milk, a strong light source (powerful torch or spot lamp)

Fill the container with water, darken the room and shine the light through the container. What colours can you see? You'll probably see lots of colours caused by the objects on the other side of the tank. Pour some milk into the water at one end of the container, then shine the light through it again, from the milky side of the container. What colours can you see now?

At the non-milky end, the water should look orange or red. This is because the milk filters out the light from the blue end of the light spectrum, leaving only light from the red end. The same thing happens at sunrise or sunset – the light from the blue end of the spectrum that we normally see during the day is scattered away from us, and we're left with the light from the red end of the spectrum!





GAMES

BLINDFOLD GAMES

Use these games to explore the physical absence of light. You might wish to invite someone with a visual impairment to chat with your group, so that they can get an appreciation of the different challenges they face.

Blindfold drawing



You will need: pens, paper, blindfolds, sample pictures

Before the event, prepare some drawings that children/young people can copy during the game. Make some simpler pictures and one or two that are a bit more challenging!

Put the group into pairs and give each pair a blindfold, a pen and a piece of paper. Encourage the pair to decide who will be the artist and who will be the describer. The artist should put the blindfold on and pick up the pen. Give each describer the easiest of the pictures and challenge them to describe it to their partner, who should try to draw the picture. When everyone has finished, compare the results! You could give points for the best (and/or the funniest!) effort. Go on to try the other pictures you have prepared.

Steal the keys



You will need: a large bunch of keys, a blindfold

Sit the group in a circle and ask for one volunteer to sit in the middle of the circle and put on the blindfold. Place the keys behind the volunteer. The other players in the circle should try to steal the keys without being heard by the blindfolded volunteer. If the volunteer hears anything, they should point in the direction they think the sound has come from. If they point at the player trying to steal the keys, that player sits down and another player should have a turn. If the player succeeds, they take over as the blindfolded volunteer in the middle.



Cross the river



You will need: chalk or masking tape, blindfolds, sheets of newspaper

Mark out two lines on the floor of your space, about five metres apart. This is your 'river'. Put the children/young people into groups of six, and give each group three blindfolds and two sheets of newspaper. Line the groups behind one of the lines.

Three of the six players should put on a blindfold. The whole group must cross the river standing only on the sheets of newspaper. The three sighted players need to make sure their blindfolded team mates don't fall into the river. If they do, they have to go back to the start.

The first team to cross the river is the winner. Make the game more difficult by increasing the width of the river, making the sheets of newspaper smaller or blindfolding a fourth member of the team.

Secret structures



You will need: a Lego structure, sets of Lego bricks needed to make the structure, some kind of screen

Before the event, make a Lego structure, then put together sets of the bricks needed to make that structure – you'll need enough sets for one per pair of children/young people. Make the structure as simple or complex as you wish! Set the structure behind a screen, so it can't be seen from the room.

Put the children/young people into pairs and give each pair a set of Lego bricks. One of the pair is the architect and the other is the builder. The architect should go to look at your structure, then return to the builder and describe how to make it. The builder should then put the bricks together in the correct way. The architect can go and look at your structure as many times as they like, but shouldn't physically help the builder. The first pair to finish correctly wins!

ACTIVITIES

Morse code



You will need: torches, copies of the Morse code alphabet (search the internet for an appropriate version), pens, paper

Before the event, put together a list of simple messages. Put the group into pairs or small teams. Give one person in each pair/team a torch and the list of messages. Give the others a pen and some paper. Give everyone a copy of the Morse code alphabet (or project it somewhere so that everyone can see). Put the players with the torch on one side of the room, and everyone else on the other.

The player with the torch and messages should use the torch to communicate the message in Morse. The others in their team should try to decode the message and write it down.

Wide game



You will need: two special 'light sources', glow sticks, a large playing area

Before the session, make two special light sources. These could be models of fire, flaming torches or lighthouses, or something that looks far more science fiction! They should be fairly large, but easily carried.

Mark out your playing space and risk assess any hazards. If necessary, place leaders to keep an eye on any areas that might need monitoring (such as places where it might be hazardous to run).

Split the children or young people into two groups and give each one a light source to protect. Give each player a glow stick, and each team a supply of more glow sticks. Ask the team to appoint one player as the Guardian of the Light and give them the supply of spare sticks. Send the teams away to find a suitable base where they should place their light source.

The aim of the game is to locate and steal the light source from the opposing team. Teams can catch members of the opposing team and take their glow stick. This 'caught' player is then sent back to their base to collect another glow stick from their Guardian. Award the teams points for the number of glow sticks they take from their opponents and if they manage to steal the other team's light source. Set a time limit on the game.



LET THERE BE LIGHT!

Use these activities to help children and young people dig into the Bible.

Younger children



You will need: lots of photographs of light (from the internet or taken by you in the weeks leading up to your party), a Bible, a picture of each of these things: light, the blue sky, a beach with palm trees, the moon and stars, a bird, an animal, a group of people

Spread out the photographs in front of the children. Look at them together and ask everyone to choose their favourite picture. If more than one child wants to choose a particular picture, that's fine – they can share the photo.

Ask the group why they chose the picture they did. Accept all the children's answers and affirm everyone's choice. Comment about how wonderful all the pictures are. Can the children see what they all have in common? Light!

Show the children Genesis 1 in your Bible and then tell the story of creation:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Then God said, 'Let there be light!' And there was! *(Show the children the picture of light.)*

Then God created the sky. *(Show the children the picture of the sky.)* He separated the waters and the land. *(Show the children the picture of the beach.)*

Then he filled everything with more creations! He put the sun, moon and stars in the sky. *(Show the children the picture of the moon and stars.)* He put fish in the water and birds in the sky. *(Show the children the picture of a bird.)* And he put animals on the land. *(Show the children the picture of an animal.)* Finally, he made humans. *(Show the children the picture of people.)* And at the end of all that, God had a rest.

Ask the children what their favourite part of the story was. Is any of the story about them?

What next?

Enjoy singing some songs about God's creation or create models ('Models of creation' on page 19).



Older children



You will need: two large pieces of blue cloth, one large piece of brown cloth, cloth of other colours, pillows and/or rugs, chairs and tables, a Bible, torches, sweets as prizes

Using the material, chairs and tables, create a den, which everyone can easily sit in. Put the rugs and pillows inside. Check that your den is safe, and then invite everyone to go inside.

Once settled in your den, invite the children to wonder what it was like before the world existed. Start to read Genesis 1. At verse 3, encourage the group to take the roof off your den and let the light flood in! Go on to read the rest of the passage (up to Genesis 2:4), stopping at these points:

Verse 6: ask some volunteers to stretch out one of the blue pieces of cloth over the heads of everyone else to make the sky.

Verse 9: lay the other piece of blue cloth on the floor and place the brown piece next to it, for the land and sea. Put the children in pairs or threes and challenge them to make a tree or plant using only their bodies! Award prizes for the best/most creative.

Verse 15: use the torches to create the lights in the sky. You could create a whole solar system, with children being the planets going around the sun.

Verse 20: stand the children on your 'sea' and stretch the sky cloth over them. Challenge them to be a bird in the sky or a creature in the sea. Award prizes for the best/most creative.

Verse 24: stand the children on your 'land'. Challenge them to be a creature on the land. Award prizes for the best/most creative.

Verse 27: have all the children walk down the middle of the room as if on a catwalk. Do a commentary, calling out good points about the children and saying that they are made in God's image.

Use the torches to create the lights in the sky. You could create a whole solar system, with children being the planets going around the sun.



Chapter 2 verse 4: get the cushions and rugs, and have a rest!

Ask the children what the most important part of the story was. Is any of the story about them?

What next?

Play some blindfold games (see page 21) or create some planets ('Solar system' on page 18)!

ACTIVITIES

Young people



You will need: a picture each of light, the blue sky, a beach with palm trees, the moon and stars, a bird, an animal, a group of people; pens and paper, art materials, reflective music and the means to play it

Show the young people the pictures and ask them to put them in order of importance. Tell the group that they should come up with reasons for their decisions. If you have lots of young people, split them into smaller groups and give each group a set of the pictures.

Chat through the lists – were there differences of opinion? Why did they decide one was more important than another? Allow space for some discussion between the group members.

Explain that the pictures summarise the creation story from Genesis 1:1 – 2:4; briefly retell the story using the pictures as visual aids. As you tell the story, lay the pictures out in two columns: light, sky and beach in column one; moon and stars, bird and animal/humans in column two. Point out how what God creates in days one to three, he fills up in days four to six.

Wonder together what the creation story tells us about God. Do the group think creation happened like this? Or does this story tell us other truths? Christians have differing opinions on this, so acknowledge those who come from different viewpoints. Whether literal or figurative, this passage still tells us much about God, us and our relationship with him.

Read verses 26 and 27 again. God created us in his image. Have a time of quiet where the young people can reflect on this. Give out pens, paper and art materials, and encourage the group to respond in a way that suits them. They might write a letter to God, draw a picture or create a poem. If you can, play some reflective music as the young people work. Be available if anyone wants to chat or ask a question.

What next?

Create some firework pictures (see page 19) or have a light disco (see page 16)!



HERE 2stay.



GENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD NURTURE

ANCHORS/RITES OF PASSAGE

MENTORS AND LIFE COACHES

PEAK EXPERIENCES

POSITIVE PEER COMMUNITY

RESPOND WITH COMPASSION

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

BIG STORY OF THE BIBLE

SERVE IN MISSION

THE URGENT CALL

‘One of the biggest problems I have seen, and which I believe must be addressed, is that a large percentage of children who have been brought up in Sunday Schools and churches – and in Christian homes – do not continue on into adult church.’

David Goodwin, *Lost in Transition* (Aus)

The Here2Stay acknowledges that a large part of our discipling strategy has revolved around the imparting of *information*. While the content of our curricula and programs is important, this strategy alone is not producing mature disciples. To this equation we need to intentionally add experiences that focus on *formation* so that faith goes deeper. The result will be *transformation* and followers of Jesus who are Here2Stay.

What are the formational ‘experiences’ that, if integrated into a long term journey with our children from their birth, will cause their faith to grow deeper, be more strongly rooted and grounded, and provide a foundation and stability for the turbulent years ahead? Here2Stay explores further **10 foundational formational** experiences that have largely been overlooked in our ministry programs with children, young people and young adults.

The beginning of the solution to see a reversal of this trend is at our fingertips – if we are prepared to take the journey.

START THE JOURNEY AT WWW.HERE2STAY.ORG.AU

Talking Jesus at a Light Party

By Bob Goody

This is quite possibly the most difficult part of planning for your Light Party. It is often the one thing that very few people want to take the responsibility for!

Many will put their hand up for helping with craft, food, welcoming and even sometimes doing the music. But if you want them to talk about Jesus to a room full of children who have eaten more sugar than they probably should have done, they may ask, 'Where's the exit?'

But in reality, this is actually one of the most meaningful and, dare I say, most crucial parts within the whole of children's ministry. It is really lovely when we are able to put together a fantastic night that is jam-packed with games, music, food, prizes and even the odd bouncy castle or two thrown in for good measure. But if all of this happens without telling the children something of the hope to be found in Jesus, then all of our time in planning, preparing and leading our night has equated to just that: a bit of fun.

Now please do not take what I am saying the wrong way. We may not have to always just preach and tell people about Jesus; there is a real importance to relationship building and showing faith through action. Yet for one night of the year, our Light Party gives us an incredible opportunity to share with those we have built relationships with. For many adults the clue is actually in the name and gives us a great platform to share from as people ask why we call it a Light Party when everyone else celebrates Halloween.

Now I am here to offer you a few helpful pointers as to how to share about Jesus at your Light Party. I have shared the good news of Jesus thousands of times in front of many audiences and so I have been in exactly the same position as you, but breathe deeply and we will journey through this together. Being a part of helping a child have a chance to hear and respond to the gospel for themselves is the greatest thing that we could ever be a part of, a first step into a lifetime of faith for them. Personally, I actually responded to the gospel the very first time someone explained it to me, so do not underestimate what God may say and do during your Light Party.



**'How can they
hear if nobody
tells them?'**

Romans 10:14

1 Be yourself! Probably the most important piece of information that I can ever offer to people is to be themselves. Children are able to spot if someone is putting on an act, wearing different clothes or speaking differently. They can tell if someone is phoney from a mile off, so do not change who you are to suit the audience.

2 Keep it short. If a child is surrounded by activities, food, bouncy castles and such like, and you talk for any more than five minutes, you have lost them. Talks at a Light Party are not designed to be like a sermon from church. They are meant to be a nugget of pure gold that lets children know that God loves them, God wants to be their saviour and their friend, and he wants to walk with them every day of their lives.

3 Pray. It is not about anything fancy that we do, but it is about what God is going to do. So ensure that your event and your talk are soaked in prayer.

4 Pick a theme and stick to it. If the entire event leading up to the talk has revolved around Jesus being the Light of the World, then please make sure that you speak about that. Nothing is more baffling than switching the theme on someone part way through. This just confuses people, and switches their connected brains off, as it just does not make sense.

5 Reiterate, reiterate, reiterate. There is real power in reiterating the same point to someone, as it reinforces the idea within their heads, and ultimately within their hearts. At our events, when we are in the schools, out in the communities, in our churches, wherever we are, if we keep telling people how much God loves them, then they will start to understand for themselves just how much God loves them. I do not mean just spend five minutes repeating the phrase God loves you, but you could say five reasons why God loves them.

6 Object lessons. We live in a visual world, and many people learn by seeing, so think about if there is an object, or objects that would help to enhance your talk. If you are speaking about Jesus being the Light of the World (candle, torch, glowstick, lamp, camera flash) or

God loves (heart pillow, heart shape, love heart sweets, red cloth, me-to-you bear). You could have several objects, an object for each child, or a bag or treasure chest of objects.

7 Magic tricks. If you are nervous and this is your first talk, I would not point you to this option. Having said that, if you want something a bit different then check out some of the great illusions including flash paper, gospel ropes or even escapology if you want a big dramatic trick. Illusions help you to keep your talk visual and to give you that extra wow factor to remember.

8 Keep it simple. Talks do not have to be long and drawn out. They could simply be two minutes of sharing about who Jesus is, and how much he loves us. There are many examples of short gospel presentations on Google, including 4Points who narrow down the gospel to four simple pictures and phrases. We do not need to share the entirety of the Old and New Testament for a child to understand that God loves them and wants a relationship with them.

9 Attention, application, appeal. I was taught a very simple way to shape all of my talks. Start by finding a way to grab people's attention to the subject, whether that is through asking a question, shocking them, or showing an object to help them to consider your main point. Next, you need to bring some application: what does this mean for them; how does it apply to their lives? Then finally, you make your appeal: what are they going to do with the information?

10 Just do it. If we believe in the power of the gospel to change hearts and lives, as it has done for us, then above anything else we should feel compelled to share that power and love with anyone who will listen. It may make you feel nervous, but remember even Moses did not think he was good enough to speak, yet God used him to change the world. God uses what we offer to him. As long as we pray, stay close to him and remain faithful to what he has called us to, then who can be against us?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bob is a development worker for Scripture Union. He is passionate about caring, sharing and empowering the Christian church into action and helping to ensure that every child and young person has an opportunity to hear the gospel in a form that they can understand and respond to. He does this by working in schools, churches, parks, festivals or even just out on the streets.



7 ways to keep in touch

By Ali Campbell

You never thought this day would come, but after weeks of planning, perspiration and waking up in the middle of the night to scribble something on a 'to-do list', it is DONE.

The Light Party is over for another year... well, yes it might be - but now is not the time to coast towards Christmas (argh, Christmas is nearly here!) What kind of follow-up do you need to stay engaged and connected with those who have come along to your Light Party? How can you inspire those you already know? How can you maintain the connection with new kids and families? Here are seven things you could do:

GIVE THEM A TAKEAWAY

Is there something small that every child could take away as a memento of the evening? A bookmark? A fridge magnet? Something they make during a craft session in the evening? Is there a way of finishing off the evening with something memorable that the kids won't forget in a hurry - what ONE thing do you want them to leave knowing, thinking, doing? With so much going on in the evening itself this can get lost - but it could be the most significant thing - maybe hand out one of SU's small booklets that unpacks the meaning of Halloween.

WRITE A POSTCARD

Writing anything with a pen seems to be a lost art with emails, texts, emojis, Facebook status updates and tweets... but, if you are a child, it remains a thrill to get something through the letter box written to YOU (not your parents). A postcard

is great, because you can have a cool photo / front that relates to the Light Party night you have recently had... AND, everyone sees what has been written on the other side. Make it fun, make it memorable and make it personal. If you remember something about the child (involve your team in this), then add that. (They might have had a really cool costume, got stuck in with a wacky game at the front or just looked like they were having stacks of fun.) What this says to a child is, 'Hey, they noticed me!'

DOOR STOP VISITS

Much like a postcard, it is rare for children to have visitors! You don't need to go in for a cup of tea and cake; a door stop hello is often sufficient just to say to the kids, 'We loved having you at the Light Party' and to the parents, 'Hi, we do a bunch of other stuff for children - check out this leaflet - my details



are on the back if you want to know more.' Don't do a heavy push; light touch contact is best. They have your details, the kids are thrilled you dropped by and you didn't try to sell them anything or collect money for the church roof. As you are going round doing these doorstep visits, don't forget to pray for open hearts and great conversations.

ENHANCE YOUR WEEKLY STUFF

Sometimes we pull out all the stops for special events. Going for a bit of WOW is great and it adds to the fun of an evening, but if our regular stuff is a bit tired by comparison, just how will it compare when children turn up for the first time after a Light Party expecting some of the same games, songs, action, and enthusiasm and discover... well, something else? What ONE thing from the Light Party evening could you incorporate in your regular Sunday morning groups for children? How did the structure of the evening work - could you look at the shape of your Sunday morning stuff and tweak the timings? It doesn't need to be something HUGE, but including something from the evening will bring a bit of familiarity for any visitors who got their first taste of your church from attending the Light Party.

SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

You may or may not be active in your local schools. If you're not, why not consider how your church could serve the local school community?

Something as simple as helping set up the fete or reading with students can be a great way to keep connecting with your community.

If you want more ideas about engaging with schools, contact your local Scripture Union office for more information.

START SOMETHING

This might be a big one, and actually takes a bit of prep in advance. Why not start something new? It might be that you have wanted to get a midweek kids' club going but have lacked the resources, the team, the money and the space. But, maybe there is such enthusiasm for the Light Party that the atmosphere changes in your church and it might be possible! Maybe the church hasn't had the vision for it, but now they have seen the church full of kids you've got their backing! Regular is better than frequent. If frequent means exhausting hard-pressed volunteers and you end up doing a flop of a thing once a week, maybe you could start something once a month. You could stick with a dressing-up theme and do a Christmas party. This gives you something very definite to invite children to that isn't going to be ages away.



CHRISTMAS

I know, I mentioned Christmas right at the beginning of this article – I didn't mean to freak you out, but, seriously, it would be great to have Christmas publicity ready in early November! This means you can send stuff out a couple of weeks after the Light Party, building on the momentum (Don't overload people with publicity on the night of the party itself – see the takeaway ideas.) This does mean you need to

be fully involved in decisions about what Christmas publicity looks like and who it is aimed at. Does it have children in mind? Is the publicity child-friendly or just aimed at adults? What prominence is given to children's and family activity over Christmas?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ali Campbell runs – The Resource – www.theresource.org.uk as a youth and children's ministry consultant. Ali has been involved in children's and youth ministry for 30 years and is passionate about intergenerational ministry and equipping the local church to pass on faith to the next generation.



Let there be light!

An all-age service plan

Aim: to discover the story of creation

Bible: Genesis 1:1 – 2:4

Preparation: for the game, you'll need eggs, some cornflakes in small bags and blindfolds; for the Bible story, make some large cloud shapes out of card, make large leaves out of green paper, blow up some beach balls and balloons, make paper birds and hang them from garden canes, collect some soft animal toys; for the prayer, get enough glow sticks for one per person.



INTRODUCTION

Welcome everyone to the service and make sure that people know where the toilets are and what to do in case of emergency. Ask the congregation what they like doing on a lovely sunny day. (If it's raining, you'll need to ask people to use their imagination!) Invite some people to the front to describe their perfect sunny day; try to choose a range of ages. Ask them why they like sunny days – draw out ideas about warmth, happiness, fun etc.

SONGS

Choose songs about light that your regular congregation will be familiar with. If you have people who are not normally part of your church community, sing the songs a couple of times, so that they become familiar with the words and music. Non-church goers might not be used to singing in a group, so be as helpful as you can when you sing to God! Scatter the songs throughout the service, if that is your tradition, or have one longer time of sung worship.

GAME

Ask for some volunteers. Set out the eggs on the floor across the front of your meeting space. Challenge the volunteers to pick their way blindfolded through the eggs, from one side to the other. Let them 'memorise' where the eggs are, and then blindfold them and position them at one end. Make a big thing about the danger of standing on the eggs, emphasising the crunching noise that will indicate they've stepped on an egg. While you're doing this, get someone else to quietly replace the eggs with the cornflakes in small bags. Make sure the congregation doesn't give the game away.

Set your volunteers out on their quest, and be over the top when they step on an 'egg'! After a few moments, reveal to your volunteers what has happened. Ask them how difficult it was to try to avoid the 'eggs', and what they thought when it seemed as if they had stepped on one.

BIBLE STORY

Tell the story of creation. Divide the congregation into five different sections and give each of these sections one set of the props to wave above their heads. Start the story with your meeting space as dark as you can make it.

In the beginning, there was God. He made the heavens and the Earth. There was nothing there, except the Spirit of God.

Then God said, 'Let there be light!' And there was light! (Turn on all the lights in your venue.) God separated the light and darkness. He called them 'day' and 'night'. It was amazing!



God said, 'I command a dome to separate the water above and the water below.' And it happened! (Give the clouds to the first section of your congregation. Encourage them to wave them about their heads.) He named the dome 'sky'. It was amazing!

God said, 'Let all the water under the sky come together to make land and sea.' And so it happened. Then God said, 'I command the earth to produce all kinds of plants.' And that happened too! (Give out the paper leaves to the second part of the congregation and encourage them to wave them around.) It was amazing!

God said, 'Let lots of different lights appear in the sky to shine on the earth.' God made two powerful lights, the sun for the day and the moon for night. He filled the sky with stars too. (Throw the beach balls and balloons into your third section. They can wave them about or bat them here and there.) It was amazing!

God said, 'I command the sea to be full of creatures, and birds to fly above the earth.' God made all kinds of creatures of the sea and of the sky. (Give the fourth part of your congregation the birds on sticks and ask them to 'fly' them around, being careful not to hit anyone.) It was amazing!

God said, 'Let the earth give life to all kinds of creatures.' God made every creature. (Give out the soft toys for your fifth section to wave around.) It was amazing! Encourage everyone to wave around their props and cheer.

It was all amazing, but God wasn't finished. He said, 'Let's make humans, and they will be like us.' So God made men and women. (Encourage everyone to stand up.) And God blessed them. He looked at what he had made and it was astonishingly amazing!

Then God rested, because he had finished his perfect creation. (Ask everyone to sit down again.)

We'd love it if you could hold a collection for Scripture Union as part of your service. This will help us reach more children and young people with the gospel.

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Ask the congregation what their favourite part of the story was. If anyone wants to tell you, then invite them to the front, or have a roving mic to take around your space. Accept all answers and thank people for their thoughts.

Refer people back to the first day of creation, when God created light and darkness. Comment about the difference that light made to the world. Things don't grow well in the dark – plants, insects, animals and people all need sunlight to grow properly. Light is vital to life, and God makes that first.

Sometimes we think about God being light, and we don't mean light like the sun or a torch. We mean that he brings light into our lives. Later in the Bible, a man called John describes Jesus, God's Son, as the Light of the World.

Read John 8:12 out to the congregation. Go on to explain that if we walk in the dark, we can't see where we're going. And in our lives, sometimes we live in the dark. God brings an amazing light. If we live in God's light, we can have the freedom that God promises everyone. We don't have to be stuck in the dark with all the rubbish that we do wrong.

PRAYER

Give out the glow sticks, asking people to hold off snapping them until everyone has them. Ask everyone to think about places in their life where they might need God's light, so that they can see the right way forward. Encourage them to snap the glow sticks and talk to God about those places.

After a few moments, thank God for bringing light into the world and for bringing light into our lives. Ask everyone to wave their glow sticks in the air and shout, 'Thank you, God!'

BLESSING

Send everyone out with a blessing – choose one that is familiar for your tradition – and remind them about any upcoming events that you have planned (a bonfire night special or Christmas events).

AFTER THE SERVICE

Provide lots of good-quality refreshments – filter coffee, tea, homemade cakes etc – and make sure that anyone new to the church is welcomed. Enjoy the time after the service to chat and get to know each other better!

How to use this pack for your kids program

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This pack contains lots of great ideas, but how might you use them in your church kids program? Here are two suggested plans, one for Key Stage 2 and one for Key Stage 3. Each plan puts together some of the activities in the book. Feel free to swap in different activities, if the ones in the plans don't suit your context.

KEY STAGE 2

Do the 'Blindfold drawing' activity from page 21. Invite two pairs of volunteers to the front. Give one of each pair the picture, but give the other in the pair a flip chart and marker pen. Position the pairs so that the children can see what is being drawn. Once the pairs have finished, compare the drawings and let the children decide who has won!

Go on to tell the story using the retelling and props from the all-age service on pages 30 and 31. Either split the children into five sections, as in the service, or invite children to the front to hold each prop.

Talk about how easy it is to see during the day or when the lights are on. Refer back to the game you played, and comment how easy it is to copy something when you can see it. Remind the children about what God created on the first day – light.

Sometimes Christians talk about God being light, and we don't mean light like the sun or a torch. We mean that he brings light into our lives. Later in the Bible, a man called John describes Jesus, whom Christians believe is God's Son, as the Light of the World.

Do the prayer activity from page 31, adapting it so that you allow time for children to sit and think, and pray if they wish.



KEY STAGE 3

Play the game from the all-age service on page 30. Ask the young people how they felt when they couldn't see where they were going.

Do the Bible activity for young people from page 24, stopping just before the reflection activity.

Talk about how God is light for you, and what it means for you to walk in his light. You might choose to read out John 8:12 at this point, commenting that Jesus is often described as 'the light'.

Show the pictures of creation again, and as the photos loop round, ask the young people to think about the one they like the best. Why? In a time of quiet, encourage the young people to consider what they are struggling with. Do they need some 'light' in any areas of their lives?

Finish off with a prayer, if appropriate, asking God to help you live in his light.



What next with Scripture Union?

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Scripture Union is an international movement of Christians working to share the good news of Jesus with the next generation.

Through a wide-range of activities, resources and initiatives, we find locally appropriate ways of sharing God's love with children and young people.

We believe that every child should have the opportunity to investigate what Christians believe in a safe and fun environment. So, we

partner with churches to help Christians connect with the 85% of Australians not attending church in exciting and relevant ways.

We'd love to support your church as you reach out to the children and young people in your community. There are many ways we'd like to do this; please read on to find out more!

Don't stop here: get involved!

Scripture Union can help:

YOUR CHURCH

Scripture Union can help your church turn the dreams God has given you into reality.

Whether it is developing the faith of your children and young people, getting your church members connecting with God through the Bible, reaching out into your local community, or training your people for their work with children and young people, we are here to help.

Get in touch today to chat about how Scripture Union can partner with your church to share the Good News of Jesus with every generation.



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YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Do you know a young person you would love to see come to faith or grow in their relationship with Jesus?

There are Scripture Union programs that can help! Scripture Union offers a wide range of holiday programs for young people to connect with God and schools ministries that help Christian students to explore and grow their faith.

For older youth there are also opportunities to get involved in service through training programs and ministry experience.



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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WITH BIBLE ENGAGEMENT

Do you wish you had a more intimate relationship with God?

Scripture Union encourages everyone to meet God daily through Bible reading and prayer.

Scripture Union Bible reading resources can help everyone from pre-school aged children to people with dementia connect with God.

WITH CHILD SAFETY

Are you concerned about how to make your church safer for children and young people?

Scripture Union can help you implement Childsafe, a best practice safety management system that will transform your organisation and help your ministry thrive.



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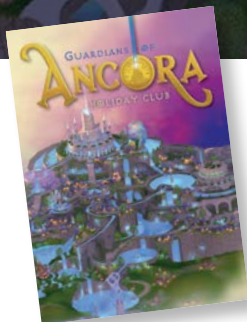
KEEP CONNECTING WITH YOUR
COMMUNITY THROUGH A

GUARDIANS OF ANCORA HOLIDAY CLUB

After your Light Party, why not continue engaging with your community through *Guardians of Ancora*, Scripture Union's exciting new holiday club, which can be used alongside the **FREE** *Guardians of Ancora* mobile game, or as a stand-alone resource.

Guardians of Ancora is suitable for children with little or no experience of church, as well as those who are already part of a church community. A flexible program, it provides everything you need to run a holiday club: craft, games, Bible discovery, small-group discussion, creative prayer and more!

The Ancora Holiday Club is also accompanied by free downloadable music, videos, printable materials and other bonus resources.



CHECK IT OUT

Search *Guardians of Ancora Holiday Club*

Hard copy resources available at
www.rfmshop.com.au