



LOVE REACHES OUT - Love In Action

Caring for people in the margins

Scripture:	Mark 2:15-17, Matthew 9:9-13
Charity:	Presbyterian Support (<i>Family Works & Enliven</i>)
Response:	What's happening in our community?

Theme: Jesus cared for people who were shunned and even despised by others. We are called to do the same.

Aim:

- Children will learn about Jesus's example in treating all humans with love and respect, no matter what their social standing.
- They will also learn about the mission of the Presbyterian Support and their work with people who live on the margins of society.
- Children will identify people who are on the outskirts (margins) of their own society (people who are homeless, kids who don't "fit in" at school, people who live in poverty, etc.) and plan ways to reach out to them with God's love.

Materials needed:

- Presbyterian Support "A better life for everyone" PowerPoint (in the appendix)
- A computer and/or projector to show the PowerPoint.
(If this is not possible, download and print the PowerPoint slides. Show it to the children using A4 sheets of paper.)
- The St. Francis prayer (poster and prayer options in appendix)
- Music and speaker (use your own music or download the song from the appendix)
- Several large beach towels
- Chairs (enough so that each child has one)
- Printed "signs" with people groups from appendix (e.g. tax collector/widow/law-breaker)
- RACK (Random Acts of Christian Kindness) ideas from appendix (optional)
- Pens or pencils and small cards or pieces of paper

Time in Church/School Chapel Service

If you meet in a large-group setting (such as church or school "chapel") as well as a smaller group (children's ministry programme/"Sunday School"/class, use the PowerPoint slideshow "Presbyterian Support, "A better life for Everyone" in the appendix to introduce the Presbyterian Support and their work in the community. There are notes at the bottom of each slide to make it more interactive. If possible, view it in "presenter's mode" or print each of the slides from which you can read the notes.

[DOWNLOAD "*Presbyterian Support's "A better life for Everyone"*" FROM THE APPENDIX]

Time in "Sunday School" or the classroom

Greeting time

As you begin your children's lesson (or RE class), greet each child by name or introduce yourself. Gather together in a circle and ask each child to say his/her name and one time when he/she felt they were excluded and/or included. E.g. "My name is Hugo and I felt excluded when I didn't make the soccer team. I felt included when my friend, Bruce, invited me to his birthday party."

Prayer time

Remind the children that God wants all of us to be a part of God's family and will never turn away from us when we pray.

Introduce the prayer attributed to St. Francis: (see options in appendix)

Dear God

As I live every day,
Help me to be a channel for peace.

May I bring love where there is hatred
and healing where there is hurt;

joy where there is sadness
and hope where there is fear.

I pray that I may always try
to understand and comfort other people as well as seeking comfort and
understanding from them.

Wherever possible
may I choose to be
a light in the darkness
a help in times of need
and a caring, honest friend.

And may justice, kindness, and peace
flow through my heart forever.

Amen (said by all)



You may like to asking some children to read/pray a part each i.e. the black line and then the red line.

After reading you could wonder with the children e.g.

I wonder what a channel for peace is? How could we be that?

What are some ways or situations where we have or could bring love instead of hurt?

In what ways can we bring healing? Etc.

- You may like to print this prayer as a large poster (see appendix) and put it up as we will be using it each week
- You may like to print smaller versions and laminate them for children to take home to use in their daily prayer time

It's time to open the bible...

For young children you may like to get them to place their hands together in a prayer stance and then open them up to create an open book as you say together:
"It's time (hands together in prayer pose), to open (hands unfold) the bible.

What does the Bible say about Caring for Outsiders?

There are many places in the Bible where God calls us to look after people who don't fit into the usual places in society.

Race to the place

Divide the children into groups and give each group a scripture to look up. When they have found it they can stand up or shout hallelujah or put their hands on their head etc. so you know when they are ready to share.





Exodus 23:9

Do not treat outsiders badly. You yourselves were outsiders in Egypt.

Mark 2:15-17 (New Revised Standard Version NRSV)

¹⁵ And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶ When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷ When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

Talking points:

-  Jesus didn't bother about popularity or power.
-  He hung out with the people who wanted to know more about God.
-  He looked into people's hearts, not at their clothes or their job or their reputations.
-  He would much rather sit with a humble person who admitted their mistakes than with a celebrity who seemed to "have it all."

Below are some stories where Jesus chose to help people who were not well-liked or accepted by the others in their town.

Challenge the children to find some outsiders of Jesus day that he reached out to and then fill in their answers on the "Outsiders Jesus loved" crossword or word find (appendix):

Luke 7:11-15 (**Widows**); Luke 7:1-10 (**Roman Soldiers**); John 4:1-42 (**Samaritans**); Luke 19:1-10 (**Tax collectors**); John 8:1-11 (**People who broke the rules**)

Exploring the word

Through game:

Ask the children if they've ever played "musical chairs." If they haven't, explain how it works. If they have, explain that we will be playing slightly differently today. Display the printed signs with the people groups on them (e.g. "tax collector"). Ask each child to choose a sign and either tape it to their clothing or use clothes pegs. If you haven't done so, talk about each of the people groups and why they might have felt like outsiders in Jesus's day. For older children (years 5 and six) you may want to ask them what the signs would say if we made them for people today. (e.g. "nerd" "bully" "weirdo" "homeless person")

Set up chairs in a circle. There should be enough chairs so that each child has one. If you have more than 20 children, split up into two groups. Each child sits in a chair to start. When the music plays, ask the children to walk around the chairs. Take away one or two chairs. When the music stops, children sit in the chairs. The children who do not have a chair will need to move to the outskirts of the room standing apart from one another. Ask them to stand well away from the group. Keep going until there is only one person (or two, if using two circles) left.

Ask the children, "How did it feel when you were 'out' and asked to go away from the group?" (allow for a myriad of responses)

Next, lay out your beach towels (or mats) on the floor.

Explain: *Now we're going to play a different version of the game. This one is a bit more like we imagine Jesus would have played.*

In this game, children start out on the beach towels or "islands." The goal is to make sure everyone has an island to stand on. Sharing islands is not only allowed, but encouraged. The game is played in the same way as musical chairs. Start the music and children walk around the islands. When the music stops, they find an island to stand on. With each new round, take away another island. As there become fewer islands, players need to get more and more creative to get EVERYONE onto the island. Larger players may want to hold smaller players up or let them stand on their feet. (If you think this can be done safely.) Hugging is a GREAT way to get everyone on an island. Use your judgement about how many islands to end on. Try to challenge your group to get as creative as possible. No one should be left in the water! (In Jesus's day, not many people could swim!)

When you've gone down to as few islands as possible – ask the group:

How does everyone feel this time? Was it different than the musical chairs game?

Introduction of Modern Charity: Presbyterian Support (Family Works and Enliven)

If you haven't already shown the PowerPoint presentation, now is a good time to do so.

Review questions:

What are some of the ways that Presbyterian Support reaches out to people who feel like they are on the "outside?"

What do you think Jesus would have to say about this group?

Which Presbyterian Support programme interests you the most?

Love in Action: Forming and Planning our Response

Discuss with the children:

What are some ways we could reach out to others in the way that Jesus did in his day and Presbyterian Support does now? (Take any and all ideas...are there some that you and/or the church could help facilitate?)

Here are some suggestions:

- *If your school has a "buddy stop" (a bench for children to wait if they don't have anyone to play with) – go by it each day and offer to play with the person sitting there.*
- *If your school doesn't have a "buddy stop," find out how to get one going! Ask a teacher, parent, or coach to help you.*
- *Find out the best way to donate to a local food bank or homeless shelter. Organise a drive or, better yet, a regular donation and include children in delivering the donated goods.*
- *Perform "Random Acts of Christian Kindness" (See the RACK materials in the Appendix for ideas.)*

AT THE VERY LEAST:

- ➔ *Challenge each student to think about one person in their lives (at school, on their soccer team, or scout group) who doesn't seem to fit in.*
- ➔ *Ask them to pray for that person and ask God to help them come up with a way to be a good friend to that person.*

Responding in Prayer:

If there is time, ask the children to write the name of the person for whom they are going to pray on a small card or piece of paper.

Begin a time of prayer with this (or your own) prayer:

Dear God, Sometimes people feel all alone even when there are lots of others around. Please help us to share your love with everyone and help them to know your love is always with them.

Now we will pray for the person in our lives who needs your help, and needs us too! Please give us the strength we need to reach out in love, even if it feels funny at first....

(Wait a few moments while children pray silently.)

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

If you have not done the Random Acts of Christian Kindness (Rack) as a group, you can print it out and send home with each child to be done as a family project.