



Introduction

Discovering God is a resource offering practical ideas for informal services and events where the focus is on creating community and a sense of belonging, demonstrating that the church is available to all. The ideas will work in face to face gatherings, and with minimal adaptation for online use.

Underpinning the materials is an intention to gather together and with God, to share experiences and stories, and learn together.

The resources provide an opportunity to develop:

- ♥ **empathy** – helping to understand others by listening to their stories
- ♥ **resilience** – learning to trust in God, to have a sense of being valued and protected
- ♥ **self-awareness** – developing a knowledge of ourselves, by asking questions, thinking and reflecting in order to grow
- ♥ **faithful living** – a conscious intention about how we act in our daily routines, with eyes open to see where we need to do God's work.

Guidance on using Discovering God resources



DISCOVER These resources are devised to help people discover themes, seasons, issues, celebrations and everyday events through a Christian perspective.



INTERACT We urge leaders to act as facilitators, limiting time spent leading from the front and encouraging people to participate and interact together to get to know each other. Consider setting up the activities and offering them simultaneously, with space and time for people to talk as they move around the space.



SPACE These materials can be used in a variety of settings and different groups, so we don't suggest any particular structure. *Somewhere to start*, and *Somewhere to finish* give ideas for opening and closing the gathering. We suggest that you try to create a space for your group to journey together, using the activities most suited to your situation, and allowing each individual to experience this in their own time.



COMMUNITY Underpinning the materials is an intention to gather together and with God, sharing experiences and stories, and learning together. The focus should be on creating community and a sense of belonging, demonstrating that the church is available to all rather than having any fixed sense of outcomes or specific learning.



OPENNESS These resources are designed to be ready to use, however they require a gentle approach. Prayers may be adapted for your context – and you may need to allow your group to use their own words, or no words at all. Questions should be left open-ended and unanswered. Fresh meanings may be discovered in the Bible passage and activities may provoke extended and helpful discussion, meaning that other activities aren't used. Be flexible – if some people really want to continue to talk, let others start another activity. We encourage you to allow this to unfold naturally.



VARIETY Timings and age-differentiation are not included in the resources. Use the spiritual styles indicated by the coloured letters to help you plan and cater for the different ways in which people connect with God. Find information about spiritual styles at www.rootsontheweb.com in the *Worship and learning support* area.



EVERYONE The materials are devised for the whole group to interact together and in smaller groups. Where you have a wide age range, mix generations together so that they can hear and learn from each other.



REGULARITY It's important to meet regularly as you form relationships and build up community together. These materials are ideal for a monthly gathering. The three *Follow-up ideas* could be sent out in the intervening weeks, to maintain contact and enable people to continue discovering.



Creation

Understanding and tackling climate change

COP26 Conference 1-12 November 2021

Discovering God is a new resource offering practical ideas for informal services and events where the focus is on creating community and a sense of belonging, demonstrating that the church is available to all.

Underpinning the materials is an intention to gather together and with God, sharing experiences and stories, and learning together by providing resources that give an opportunity to develop:

♦ **empathy** – helping to understand others by listening to their stories

♦ **resilience** – learning to trust in God, to have a sense of being valued and protected

♦ **self-awareness** – developing a knowledge of ourselves, by asking questions, thinking and reflecting in order to grow

♦ **faithful living** – a conscious intention about how we act in our daily routines, with eyes open to see where we need to do God's work.

We urge leaders to act as facilitators, limiting time spent leading from the front, and encouraging people to participate and interact together in mixed age groups. The ideas will work in face to face gatherings, and with minimal adaptation for online use. More guidance on using Discovering God resources is on the [WEB](#) in the *Worship and learning support* area.

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Somewhere to start

Here's a way to introduce the theme in the context of our everyday lives.

- Display a selection of images showing a wide range of landscapes, including natural beauty and urban scenes. Encourage people to look at these and consider the following questions: What emotions or memories do these images bring to mind? If you have experienced any of these landscapes, what was it like? When was the last time your breath was taken away by something you saw in nature? What was it? Why was it so breathtaking?
- If you're using these ideas around the time of the **COP26 Conference (1-12 November 2021)**, ask people if they've been following it and what's interested them, has it given them a renewed sense of the importance of caring for creation?

Loving God,
thank you for all the beauty you share with us;
from the powerful lion to the tiny worms in our garden,
and the place you have given us among them. **Amen.**

Somewhere to finish

Before you end, come together to revisit the theme of rest and recreation and to pray.

- Read the poem 'Warned' by Sylvia Stults (see link on [WEB](#)). Ask the group to imagine humanity has managed to slow down climate change, and threat of damage to the earth has been stalled, perhaps as a result of interventions from the COP26 Conference. With this in mind, rewrite the poem together (e.g. change a few words or lines) to turn 'Warned' into a new poem of hope and expectation. What would you call it?

Creator God,
forgive us for the mess we have made of your planet,
for our lording it over other living things.
Help us to make amends
and to treat your beautiful world with respect and care.
Amen.

Follow-up ideas

Challenge yourselves to take action during and after the COP26 Conference. Download [#ChallengeCOP26](#) for daily ideas. Decide whether to act as a church/group, or household, or both!

Here are three examples from it you could use to keep the theme and exploration of creation and climate change going, by sending out a follow-up activity each week:

 Take a trip to a 'Dark Sky Reserve' and soak up the starry night sky (see link on [WEB](#)). No 'Dark Sky Reserve' near you? Just see what you can where you are. Make a party of it, and take part in a star count.

 Pimp your pavement! Plant tree pits (the circle around the base of street trees) on your street with flowers or plant neglected planters (ask the local Council first!) with vegetables for anyone to take home and cook.

 Have a bring and share lunch together using only fruit and vegetables grown in the UK.

Discovering God

Linking the introductory activities to the theme and Bible passage.

Bible passage Genesis 1.1 – 2.3

According to this ancient creation story, over six days God created the earth, beginning with the day and night, and continuing with water and dry land; populating the land with vegetation; creating the sun, moon and stars; filling the waters, the skies and the land with animals; and finally creating man and woman, tasking them with the care of everything which had been made. Content with creation, God rests on the seventh day.

Read and share

You will need: magazines, scissors, glue, a large sheet of paper.

- Ask people to look through the magazines and cut out images that for them represent any of the things listed in the creation story.
- Read through the passage, and invite everyone to come and stick their images onto the large sheet of paper as each created thing is mentioned, until at the end of the reading all the images are gathered together, in order of appearance.

What could we learn from this passage?

Look at all the parts of our world that are described here, and how they interlink with one another. There couldn't be a day without night; dry land without the sea; fruits and seeds without dry land to

grow on; fish without the sea for them to live in; birds without the sky. And finally, humans, who can't exist without everything else – the water to drink, the land to live on, the plants to eat. Take out just one of those elements because we have destroyed it with our actions, and the rest will begin to become unbalanced and flounder. For example, it is said that without bees, mankind will die out within four years. How we treat God's creation really matters.

What does it mean for us today?

This story of creation shows us what an incredible, complicated and beautiful place the earth is. We are asked to care for it, to make sure that natural balance is maintained, but climate change is a result of our failure to do this: affecting the make-up of our atmosphere, the temperature of our waters, the ecosystems and demand for certain foods putting pressure on the natural world. We need to nurture this fragile balance, rather than upset its equilibrium with the way we live our lives. Science has shown us that there is now an urgent need to respond to the crisis created through climate change. The COP26 Conference is an important moment in this as world leaders meet to make progress towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. See all related links on the [WEB](#).

Explore... creation and climate change

Choose from these activities to help people explore the theme. We don't include timings or age-differentiation, this is designed for all ages engaging together. Use the spiritual styles indicated by the coloured letters to help you plan, and cater for the different ways in which people connect with God. Spiritual styles (as defined by David Csinos) key: **W**ord, **E**motion, **S**ymbol, **A**ction. Find out more [WEB](#) in *Worship and learning support*.

Creation wheel **E S**

Go outdoors together and make the shape of a seven-spoked wheel on the floor using twigs, as big as you like. You can do this together, or in small groups. The gaps in between are each one of the seven days of creation. Encourage people to search for natural objects, and fill each segment with an image representing what was created on that day.

My creation **W E**

In pairs, talk about something you created – a cake, clothing, something in the garden, something at school. What did it feel like to create something? How did you feel on completion? Think about a time when someone else destroyed something you had made. How did that make you feel?

Barefoot connection **E S**

Go somewhere where there is enough grass for everyone to stand on in their bare feet. Make sure you have checked the area in advance and made it safe from anything sharp (or anything rather more squidgy!). Feel the grass between your toes, its coolness and dampness under your feet. Then allow a few moments of quiet reflection. Ask: How does it feel to be so closely connected to the earth?



How does this image make you feel?

What is climate change? **W A**

Get to grips with what climate change is, what it does, and what you might do to help slow it down. Watch the video together, see link on [WEB](#). Are there any of the things the narrator suggests, that you as an individual, or you as a group, could do? Make a promise to change one thing about your living habits that someone else will hold you to (see #ChallengeCOP26 for daily challenges during each day of the COP26 Conference which you can take part in as individuals or as a group).

Get 'craftivist' **E S A**

Craftivism is a creative way to gently spread the word about tackling climate change. Have a go at the 'Dream-making' project, and allow people to think of their dreams for a healthy planet where all of God's creation is cared for (see link on [WEB](#) for kits and instructions). Alternatively, simplify the project and use cloud-shaped pieces of card. Invite people to think of their dream and write 'I #daretodream of' (pre-prepare for younger children) and then write or draw their vision for a beautiful, healthy world, e.g. plastic-free seas.