



Scripture Union

# LIGHT PARTY

- Advice on how to host a COVID-secure or online Light Party
- Top tips on how to plan, promote and run your party
- Ideas on how to talk to children about darkness
- A compilation of the best Light Party material from the past few years

2020  
PACK

‘This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.’

1 John 1:5

# Welcome

.....

Dear friends

This year, the shortening days and darker evenings of autumn and winter seem to bring even more darkness, as we face another few months of restrictions. At Scripture Union, we've been so encouraged by stories of how you and your churches, across England and Wales, have prayed for and served the 95 – those children and young people in your communities who aren't connected with church. You've been sharing God's love with them in new and innovative ways while COVID-19 disrupted all our plans and normal schedules.

Even in the darkest, most difficult times, we have a hope that shines brighter than the brightest light. We were disappointed to have to cancel our SU summer holiday and mission plans this year, but through over 30 online holidays, our dedicated volunteers have been able to share Jesus with hundreds of children and young people. Together, let's continue to reach out to the younger generations in our communities with the life-changing message of Jesus.

It might not be possible to hold a Light Party in the usual way this year, but that doesn't mean the fun has to stop. This pack contains a selection of our best Light Party activities from previous years, with advice on how they can be adapted and reworked, so that you can use them at a physically distanced gathering, online or in public spaces.

Let's remember, especially at this time, the truth of John 1:5

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



**Myles MacBean**  
**National Director**  
**Scripture Union England and Wales**



# Contents

---

**4** Reaching out while staying safe

**7** We need your help

**8** Halloween: do we ignore it or respond to it?

**10** Talking to children about darkness

**12** Real big questions about Halloween

**14** Reaching beyond church children

**16** Top tips for your Light Party or event

**17** Setting up your space

**18** Light Party activities

- 18 Light events
- 19 Games
- 20 Making
- 22 Bible exploration
- 23 Prayer ideas

**24** Serving food

**25** Finish well

**26** How can we help?



**ON PAGE 27:  
ORDER SCRIPTURE  
UNION'S TAKE-HOME  
BOOKLETS FOR YOUR  
CHILDREN**



# Reaching out while staying safe

By Leanne Sheppard

So, it's one of your favourite times of the year and the Light Party is something you really look forward to. However, this year, with all the restrictions currently in place and changing on a daily basis, are you wondering how, where and when this will work? Here at Scripture Union, we have had the same thoughts, but we want to reassure you that things are still possible, and our continuing mission to support you in reaching out to children and young people at the forefront of our minds, more now than ever.

Firstly, be encouraged that you are already equipped to do this, because it's your heart's desire to continue to engage with the children in your context, and to show them the light and love that Jesus can bring. So, with God on your side anything is possible!

For this year's edition of our *Light Party Pack*, we have looked through and pulled together some of our most popular activities from previous years that we believe can be adapted to conform with all the current government COVID-19 restrictions, regarding social distancing, group sizes and hygiene. We've also included some articles and tips from Scripture Union staff and other practitioners who are very experienced in running Light Parties. Our hope is that you feel equipped, despite the challenges that we are currently facing, to host another successful Light Party this year that is fun, memorable and, above all, safe.

## What changes can I make?

### A socially-distanced Light Party

- Make sure, before you start preparing, that you are fully up-to-date with all the latest government advice and are familiar with any rules and guidelines that your church or venue has also put in place. We have a





great article by Sharon Pritchard on page 16 that will give you some easily adapted practical advice on planning your party.

- If it is appropriate, and you have the space indoors or outside to invite children physically to a party, then why don't you set up each child or family bubble with their own activity table, with all the materials they will need to participate in the event. Don't forget to include a disposable apron and gloves (where necessary), and a rubbish bag for them to clear up afterwards and dispose of responsibly. We have put together some suitable making ideas for you such as 'Lighthouses', 'Candle holders' and others which could work really well in this context. These can be found on pages 20 and 21. Make sure you also have a one-way system in place for arriving and leaving your space or venue.
- Have an online booking system for families to use. This will enable you to keep a good control on the numbers arriving and allow you to know how much space and equipment you will need to keep them safely distanced from one another.
- Decorate an outside space with lights etc, to give a great impact when children and families arrive. Check out our article on 'Setting up your space' on page 17, for more creative ideas on decorations.
- If you are having food, you could create small buffets on each of the family bubble tables, already laid out for them to enjoy. We have more food ideas in our 'Serving food' section, which can be found on page 24.
- A treasure hunt – why not set out a treasure hunt in your local area on the theme of light, and invite children and families to participate in their own time. Take a look at <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/resource/trail-search-hope> in our Leaving Lockdown resources on the Scripture Union website, for some great advice on setting up a socially-distanced treasure hunt.





## A LIGHT PARTY ONLINE

You may have decided that you are not quite 'Zoomed out' yet and would like to host a Light Party online this year, but just how do you go about doing that? There are several options you could consider. Here are some tips to think about:

- You could get creative with your video skills and record a Light Party show, using songs and stories, to upload to YouTube on the night. (Do remember to keep in mind copyright legislation when using pre-existing story and music videos.) You could then interact with families through the chat facility on the night. Don't forget to advertise your event within your local community, giving details of the start time and how to find it online.
- A Zoom Light Party – interacting in this way has become the new normal during 2020, so why not use it to your advantage. For Zoom, you will be required to sign-up for a free or paid account that gives you the capability to setup and host your own party. Send out the digital link invitation to those who have booked-in.
- Create party bags beforehand with instructions, art materials and perhaps some sweet treats to distribute to all your families and children ahead of the event, so they have everything they need to join in and participate on the night.
- A quiz – how about hosting a Zoom quiz? This is a great way to interact online, and families can join in together and compete as one team. We have a great article called 'Real big questions about Halloween', which can be found on page 12. You could use this as a basis for your quiz questions, perhaps adapting some of them to create multiple choice questions and answers... a great way to get families talking!
- Film/video making – perhaps you could ask families beforehand to create a video on the theme of light that can be shared online with the rest of the party on the night, and an overall winner chosen. We have some tips on 'Light filmmaking', which can be found on page 18.

We hope you will find something in our pack to inspire you. Here at Scripture Union we are continuing to work hard to adapt to the current climate, because we want to continue in our mission to reach the 95. So be encouraged, be bold, step out in faith and above all have fun! Don't forget to let us know how you get on, as we love to share stories of what God is doing!



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

#### Leanne Sheppard

Content Innovator, Scripture Union England and Wales.

Leanne recently joined our staff team, after working for one of our Local Mission Partners as a schools worker for over 4 years. Her guilty pleasures are chips and the Australian soap opera Neighbours!



# We need your help

*'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations'*  
(Matthew 28:19)

You are important. God is using you to reach children and young people and to fulfil the great commission – thank you for the part you are playing.

## CAN WE ASK FOR YOUR HELP AS WE SEEK TO MAKE THE BIGGEST IMPACT WE CAN FOR THE KINGDOM?

We can only support and equip churches and individuals to share the gospel because of our generous and faithful supporters. We're so grateful for all those who commit to praying for our work and for those who choose to give financially or through volunteering their time.

Finances should never be a barrier to children and young people hearing about Jesus. That is why many of our resources are either subsidised or free, our local workers support churches free of charge and SU holidays are subsidised, with full grants available.

## PARTNER WITH US IN REACHING THE 95!

Will you join with us in mission, sharing the love of Jesus, so that more children and young people have the opportunity to explore the Bible, respond and grow in faith.

Will you commit to pray regularly for the work of SU, and for the 12 million children and young people who don't go to church?

Will you commit to supporting SU financially, as a one-off gift or regular payment, so that together we can see an increase in God's kingdom, as more children and young people start a journey of faith.

Will you stand with SU today and make a difference?



There are a variety of ways you can do this:

- **Request a speaker** – inspire your congregation to play their part in sharing the good news of Jesus with the next generation [su.org.uk/speaker](https://www.su.org.uk/speaker)
- **Share videos** – some short videos that are perfect for showing in a Sunday service [su.org.uk/videos](https://www.su.org.uk/videos)
- **Take a collection** – order collection envelopes [su.org.uk/collection](https://www.su.org.uk/collection)

To find out about other ways to support SU visit [su.org.uk/church](https://www.su.org.uk/church) or to make a donation visit [su.org.uk/gift](https://www.su.org.uk/gift)

**Thank you!**

# 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 the UK has exploded. In my view, it's no longer something that can simply be ignored. Although 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 has become a great opportunity for witnessing about Jesus.

**So it has 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 who don't yet know Jesus. Why not take this upcoming event as an opportunity to do some equipping with the whole church family in how to be a witness to Jesus? 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 pro-



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

motion check out Sharon’s top tips on page 16 and Helen’s article on page 14.

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 ‘Finish well’ on page 25 for some ideas.

Finally, although it’s important to put effort into putting on an excellent event, our battle is not simply against flesh and blood. 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 and that the darkness has not overcome him.**

Rich is married to Kit and they live in South West London. 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 from London School of Theology. Currently he works in the Unity for Mission team at the Evangelical Alliance, with his focus being the website – [greatcommission.co.uk](http://greatcommission.co.uk).\*

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



\*Greatcommission.co.uk is an online hub to inspire and equip you and your church in evangelism. Visit the site to read, watch and pray about sharing the good news, and find more than 200 resources to help you in your outreach.



# Talking to children about darkness

By Gemma Willis

Talking about darkness with children probably isn't a 'go-to' favourite topic for most of us. We'd much rather talk about light, joy, fun, happiness and other 'easy' ideas.

But darkness is far more than an uncomfortable idea. It's a present, everyday reality for so many children. In one way or another all of us encounter darkness in our lives at some point – whether it's something as common as being afraid of the dark at bedtime, or as drastic as the darkness of grief after losing a loved one, or the darkness that a mental health crisis can bring.

As people who know the love of Jesus, it's tempting to frame all of our conversations about darkness within the context of Jesus being the

bringer of light, the one who dispels all darkness, the one who heals and restores all.

However, for children living with darkness (and for adults too!) the promise that Jesus will bring light just doesn't seem enough.

Imagine for a moment that you're trapped in a pitch black cave, cold and alone with no idea if there is a way out. Although it might be comforting for a voice to promise you that 'someone who loves you is bringing a light soon and will show you the exit', if that doesn't

happen pretty quickly you'd end up feeling at best despondent and at worst unloved.

Wouldn't you rather experience someone sitting with you in the darkness, holding your hand and letting you know that they'll never leave your side?

Of course, I'm not suggesting that we reduce what Jesus offers to mere comfort and company – rather that in the way we talk to children about darkness we offer a more tangible, immediate hope that is available to all, rather than only promising



## Top 5 Tips for talking about darkness with children

- 1 Acknowledge that darkness is hard and scary.
- 2 Don't promise that Jesus will fix everything right now, rather that he will always be with us and brings hope for a different future.
- 3 Express the 'light of Christ' in practical and tangible ways – not just as an abstract idea.
- 4 Share some of your own story – how does knowing Jesus help you in times of darkness?
- 5 Even after preparing well, you may need to refer children and young people to an appropriate agency for extra support. Ensure you have researched relevant local and national agencies that can provide any extra support if necessary. If you are unsure where to look, visit [su.org.uk/mentalhealth](https://www.su.org.uk/mentalhealth)



## Ideas for sharing Jesus with children in practical and tangible ways

- Invite a child to join a small group where they can make friends and feel cared for.
- Give a child and/or their family a small gift that you know will meet a need.
- Make time to give a child your undivided attention – really listen to what they have to say.
- Encourage children to explore the Bible for themselves, inviting them to respond to Jesus in prayer while helping them to hear his voice.
- Empower children to love and care for others in their community – sometimes in sharing the love of Jesus with others we discover even more of it for ourselves!

**How can you show a child the light that Jesus brings into their life today?**

**How will you make the hope of Jesus a present-day reality, not just a future hope?**

something that we know will only be fulfilled in its entirety in eternity.

It's also important that we acknowledge just how scary the dark is.

I can remember being told as a child that the dark wasn't something to be afraid of, there weren't really any monsters under my bed and that the shadows on the wall were harmless. But when you're 4 years old, a night light makes all the difference – because it's a tangible presence that takes away your fear.

For some children, talking about the dark, whether in a literal or abstract sense, can be a triggering experience, but now it's your turn not to be afraid. Always ensure that you have proper safeguarding procedures in place and are able to make a referral to an appropriate agency where necessary. Just

because things are scary, or hard to talk about, it doesn't mean they should be avoided – in fact, a considerable amount of what Jesus said and did didn't make for easy conversation with those he met!

Sometimes it can be helpful to appropriately share how you handle darkness in your own life – it can be hard for children to identify with your story if it's too full of sunshine and rainbows – a few thunderstorms along the way are far more authentic and relatable. It can be especially relevant to share your own story of how you experience Jesus with you in practical and tangible ways when life is hard.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

#### Gemma Willis

Head of Development Hub, Scripture Union England and Wales

Gemma Willis has over 15 years of experience in working with children and young people. She is passionate about communicating the good news of Jesus in relevant, exciting and engaging ways. She also likes pies, mountains and cats.



# Real big questions about Halloween

By Gavin Calver



Halloween can raise huge questions and stir up deep fears for children and young people, even though on the surface they may not want to show it. They'll probably want to appear cool and treat it all light-heartedly.

However, in the planning of your Light Party, don't pack the programme so tightly that those who attend don't have time to ask some of their questions or express their fears, if they want to.

To help prepare your team for this, think through how you yourselves would answer the questions on this page – they're real questions from year 6 children in a London school.

On the night, discuss questions and fears when the children and young people ask you about them. If you just present questions that other people have, you may make some unnecessarily fearful where they were fine before!

## HALLOWEEN BEGINNINGS

- Why is Halloween in October?
- How did Halloween start?
- How is Halloween linked to Christianity?
- Why do we call it Halloween and what does Halloween mean?
- What is Halloween basically all about?
- What does Halloween symbolise and why?
- Does Halloween represent death or dead people?
- Is Halloween real or fake?

## HALLOWEEN AND THE DEVIL

- Is Halloween the devil's (Satan's/Shatan's) birthday?
- Is the devil real?
- Where did the devil come from?
- Does the devil have horns and a tail?
- Why are there ghosts? Are they real?

## HALLOWEEN PRACTICES

- Why do some people celebrate Halloween and others don't?
- Why do people do scary things on this night?
- Why do people go around looking for candy?
- Why do people dress up/wear costumes at Halloween?
- Why do people go trick or treating, and why is it called that?
- Why do people carve pumpkins?

## HALLOWEEN AND GOD

- Why is God magic?
- Is God a person or a spirit?
- Why did God create bad people?
- Why do bad things happen when God's love is with us?
- What's wrong with Halloween anyway? Why is it bad, or evil, or dark?





When you and your team have attempted to answer these questions, check out how Gavin Calver, CEO for the Evangelical Alliance, responded to them at [lightparty.org.uk](https://lightparty.org.uk)

### TOP TIPS ON TACKLING QUESTIONS

- 1 Children love to ask questions about almost anything. They ask 'Why?', 'What?', 'Who?', 'How?' very often. It's only natural for children and part of their trying to make sense of their world. Similarly, young people love to ask questions, but to help them build a coherent worldview: 'What do I really believe?' Questions are an important part of their learning – don't ignore their questions or treat them lightly.
  - 2 Pray before your Light Party. Ask God to guide you as you respond to any questions the children or young people may have.
  - 3 Be genuinely interested in the children and young people and what they're saying. During the event itself make sure team members aren't so busy with responsibilities that they can't stop to talk. Then take time to listen carefully to all that's on their mind. Demonstrate real concern for them – don't just fire off your pre-prepared answer.
  - 4 There are two stages in answering the questions children and young people ask. Firstly, find an answer that you understand and believe, that's consistent with the Bible (especially where faith questions are concerned). Secondly, work out how to say it so that the unchurched child or young person can understand. Don't use Christian terminology unless you also explain what it means.
- Think about:
- using the right words: within the range of their vocabulary
  - talking about accessible concepts: concrete as far as possible, not abstract or beyond their experience
  - using the stuff of their world in your answers: take examples from school, home, TV, pastimes, friends or culture to illustrate your answers
  - restricting yourself to short answers: or risk losing their interest, their understanding, or both!
- 5 If you're not sure what they're asking (or you need time to think!), ask them what they mean or some other question that makes them say their question in another way.
  - 6 If you're with a group of children, sometimes it's good to let other children or young people say what they think – they'll probably tell you anyway!
  - 7 If you don't know the answer or can't explain it, say so. They will appreciate your honesty. Alternatively, look it up, or ask a friend to help. Be sure to note the question – don't forget it! Try to get back to them before the end of your event, if possible.



# Reaching beyond church children

By Helen Franklin

It's estimated that a staggering 95% of children and young people in England and Wales aren't in church.

So how are all those children 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 Mission Enabler, 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 31 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 pavement 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?** Explore ideas on what to do after your Light Party to keep on reaching out to the children and young people who attended.

**Best of all would be to have events planned every two to three 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 Mission Enabler in Wales. 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. Helen is a passionate adopted Welsh lady and is learning Welsh. She is now able to deliver training sessions and tell stories in Welsh!

**ABOUT  
THE AUTHOR**



# Top tips for your Light Party or event

By Sharon Pritchard

## FUNDING

Please don't be tempted to charge for attending your Light Party or event. 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. 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 or event is key to making it a success. Create a flyer that can be given out in your church, local schools and the wider community. You may want to attach a consent form to each flyer (if parents aren't going to be present) to be given out in schools, then all the required information is kept together when it arrives home in a school bag. 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 encourage the children and young people who are part of your church to invite their friends along. Advertising your event on social media is another good way of getting your information out to the wider community.

## RESOURCES

Of course, you'll need this pack to help you plan and run your Light Party or event, but there will

undoubtedly be other items you'll need too. As mentioned earlier, try to borrow resources where you can; otherwise try to keep within your budget. 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 at what you can come up with! Don't forget to buy the SU giveaway booklets for children in advance – *What is the Light?* and *What Do You Do When Darkness Comes to Visit?* See the back cover for more details.



## FREE RESOURCES

Scripture Union has a lot of free resources to download at [lightparty.org.uk](http://lightparty.org.uk). They include extra party ideas, hints and tips, downloadable posters and invitations, sample health and safety forms and much, much more. Check them out today, so you don't spend time creating stuff that's already available!

## SAFEGUARDING

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

- 1 Make sure you adhere to your church's safer recruitment policy.
- 2 If volunteers don't have a current DBS and need one, you must obtain these before the event.

3 Check that you have first-aid provision in place for your event.

4 Make yourself aware of the safety policies for your venue, such as fire exits and the appropriate use of the facilities.

5 Complete a risk assessment for your activities. Ask your venue for their own building's risk assessment, if there is one.

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

7 Register each person who attends. A signing-in sheet is a good way of keeping a record of who is there.

## PRAY

Ask for prayer support from your church (including the children and young people) and any other Christian friends and family members you have.

Sharon Pritchard is the Children's Adviser for the Diocese of Durham and has been in post for six years. She offers training, support, resources and advice to parishes in the diocese on all aspects of children's ministry. Sharon lives in Chester-le-Street with her husband Alan. And she collects nativities and loves all things Christmassy.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



# 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.



# 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 filmmaking



**You will need:** filmmaking 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 discuss 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 do it yourself and show the finished film at a special premiere night!

### Bonfire and fireworks



**You will need:** a large outdoor space, firewood, fireworks, refreshments (see page 24 for suggestions), risk assessment and appropriate insurance

Having a fireworks 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.

The Fire Service has lots of help and advice for you so you know where to start – visit their website: [www.fireservice.co.uk/safety/bonfires/](http://www.fireservice.co.uk/safety/bonfires/) Follow their guidance when planning fireworks and bonfires. Plan your time, so that people can watch the fireworks, see the bonfire and have refreshments. Have a contingency plan for if it rains – you might want to set out some of the making activities and games (pages 19-21) inside.



# GAMES



## BLINDFOLD GAMES

There are a number of games you can play that include blindfolds. Have fun then think about what it's like to live with, or without, light. (Some children and young people don't like to be blindfolded, so ask beforehand.)



### Obstacle course (10 minutes)



**You will need:** blindfolds, items to create an obstacle course, a stopwatch

Before the session, set up a simple obstacle course or mark a simple maze on the floor. Risk assess the activity, making sure that children/young people can complete the course safely. Put the group into pairs – one to be a guide and one to be blindfolded. In turn, the guide should help their blindfolded partner navigate the course/maze, by giving instructions (but not physically guiding them). Time each partnership – the winner is the one who completes the course the quickest, and safest!

### Blindfold drawing (15 minutes)



**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 (10 minutes)



**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.



### A bag of props (15 minutes)



**You will need:** a number of random objects or light-related objects, a large bag

Before the session, gather together a collection of random objects that might spark some storytelling ideas. You could choose a stuffed animal, a guidebook to a far-off land, a toy car or a can of baked beans – use your imagination in order to fuel the imagination of the children! If you're doing a light themed party, collect a number of light-related objects such as a torch, sunglasses, a picture of the Milky Way or a candle.

Place all your objects in the bag.



Sit everyone in a circle and invite someone to pull an object out of the bag. Start a story off using this object as inspiration. Once the children/young people have taken the first object as far as they can, ask someone to take out another object.

Continue like this until all your objects have been used or your story reaches a natural end.

Chat about the story you created – was it fun? Would they change anything about it? For light parties, chat about how light and darkness played a part in the story.

## MAKING

### Lighthouse (10 minutes)



**You will need:** crisp tubes, clear yoghurt pots, cheap torches, art materials, sticky tape

Give each child a crisp tube, yoghurt pot and torch. Encourage everyone to decorate their tube. They can make it look like a lighthouse (you might need to find some sample photos of lighthouses, in case children have never seen one), or anything else they like. If your children are familiar with Guardians of Ancora, they could make a Spire of Light.

### Morse-code puzzles (10 minutes)



**You will need:** Morse-code alphabet (search online for an appropriate version), torches, pens and paper

Put the group into teams of four. You could do this in pairs, but it would take a lot longer! Then send two from each team to one end of the room, and two to the other. Each pair should have a copy of the Morse-code alphabet, and one pair should have a torch. Give the pair with the torch these words and challenge them to communicate each word using short and long flashes of the torch to create Morse-code letters. The team at the other end of the room should write down the letters as they are signalled.

MATCH TORCH LIGHT LAMP FIRE

The winners are the ones who get the most words, or who complete the task first. For young people, make the words more complicated or try to communicate whole phrases!



Once the tube is decorated, turn the torch on and place it 'light up' inside the tube. Place the yoghurt pot upside down on the top of the tube and secure it with a couple of pieces of tape. Turn the lights off so that you can see the effect! As you work, chat about what lighthouses do and what might happen if they stopped working.

### Light photos (15 minutes)



You will need: a camera (and maybe a tripod), lots of mobile sources of light (such as torches, glow sticks or play lightsabres)

Before the session, gather together some mobile sources of light – ones that can be safely moved around. Set the shutter speed on your camera to around ten seconds (you don't need a sophisticated camera to do this – you can change the shutter speed on many smartphones). Experiment a little before the party, so that you can be sure you're happy with the results.

Give the children/young people the sources of light and help them to come up with a plan of what they want their photo to look like. They should then practise moving the lights around in a pattern for ten seconds. Once they are happy, turn your room lights off and take the picture. You should then come up with an image full of trails of light. Enjoy creating lots of images together – if you have a laptop available, you could put them together on a PowerPoint presentation to show to everyone.

You will need to get permission from parents/carers to take photographs, but you shouldn't be able to see any distinct faces in the final images.

### Candle holders (10-15 minutes)



You will need: clean jam jars, coloured tissue paper, PVA glue and spreaders, battery-operated candles

Give each child a jam jar and encourage them to tear up different colours of tissue paper and stick small pieces in a pattern onto the jam jar. When the children are happy with their design, leave the jam jars to dry. Once they are dry, place a battery-operated candle in the jar and see how the light shines through the different colours.

To give this activity a storytelling slant, create an image on the jar out of tissue paper. Once you have all finished, try to make up stories about the pictures you have created. Talk about how, before reading was a widespread skill, many people found out about stories from the Bible from stained-glass windows.

### Booklet making (10 minutes)



You will need: A4 plain paper (both white and brightly coloured), long-armed stapler, art materials

Create a booklet for the children to decorate and then keep. Ask the children to select a brightly coloured piece of paper for the cover. Then place two sheets of white A4 paper on top of the cover. Fold the paper in half to create an A5 booklet. Use the stapler to join all the paper together at the spine. Then encourage the children to decorate their books as they wish.

Once everyone has finished, admire all the booklets and challenge the children: what stories are they going to write or draw in their books?

### Comic strip (20-30 minutes)



You will need: paper, felt-tip pens, pencils

Put everyone into groups of two or three. Challenge them to retell part of their favourite story (biblical or fiction) through a few frames of a comic strip. If you know the children/young people well, try to pair those who like drawing with those who like writing – that way they can split the writing and drawing of the comic strip accordingly. Help the groups to decide what story they're going to tell and what needs to happen in each frame of the comic strip. (What narration or dialogue will they need? What does the picture need to show?)

Once everyone has finished, show the comic strips and see if people can guess what story is being told.



# BIBLE EXPLORATION



## Light for the world (20 minutes)



**You will need:** a Bible, the song 'Follow me' (from *Bitesize Bible Songs*, SU) or other suitable song and the means to play it

Sit the children in a circle and chat about what you have done so far at your party. What have the children enjoyed? Ask the children to think about:

- what their favourite part of the party has been
- what they like about the light and the darkness

Tell the children that Jesus told his friends that he was Light for the World. Read John 8:12 to the children. Explain that Jesus didn't mean that he actually shone light on everyone! He was talking about helping people to live happily, to feel safe with God and to choose the best way to live. Ask the children to think about:

- what living in the light means
- what living in the dark means
- if Jesus is their light, what he might help them with

Play the song to the children and enjoy learning and singing it together. If they are keen, encourage the children to come up with some actions!

## Shine like stars (10 minutes)



**You will need:** paper and marker pens, Bibles, stars cut from yellow paper

Ask the young people to think about how others see them. Invite them to create a word picture using words that might be used about them. Try to stick to positive words, rather than negatives. Encourage the young people to go round to each other's papers and add encouraging words.

Comment that we all make an impact on others, and we hope that our impact is a positive one. If anyone wants to share their word picture, let them do so. Say that sometimes we hide our positive side away, scared about what others might think. This can be especially true if

we have a faith. Read Matthew 5:14-16. Ask the young people what they make of that. Do they sometimes feel that they hide their positive qualities – or their faith – because they are scared of what others might think?

Go on to read Philippians 2:14-16. The writer, Paul, encourages his friends to shine like lights or stars in the world, to show people how amazing God is. Give each young person a paper star and ask them to think about what kind of light they show to the world. If they are Christians, would others know? Are they showing Jesus' light to others?

## Jesus the light (5 minutes)



**You will need:** the most powerful torch you can find, a cardboard frame (as a 'window frame'), strips of cardboard, sticky tape, red or orange cellophane

Make up your 'window frame' in advance. Onto your cardboard frame stick cross-pieces of card to make it look like a window. Then stick the cellophane to the back.

Switch off most of the other lights (but not if it will upset anyone) and switch on the torch. Shine it into all the dark corners of your venue.

Ask the children and young people why light is such a good thing, and value their answers.

Light **helps us see things as they really are**. There's a power cut, we grab a big torch. We need to see. (Shine the light into the corners again, but not into people's eyes.)

Light **warns us**, like a lighthouse when there are rocks around that would be dangerous for ships. (Flick the torch off and on several times.)

Light **shows the way**. Think of an aircraft coming in to land on a runway at night. (Place your torch on the floor shining up at the ceiling.)

Light **attracts us**. (Hold up your 'window frame' and shine the torch through from behind it.) Imagine you're heading home on a dark, snowy night. The lights from

# PRAYER IDEAS



the windows are so warm and welcoming. You just want to be there.

Jesus is like light. He comes from God, he tells people how things really are – the truth about God, the world and themselves. He shows them the way to be friends with God. Believing and trusting in Jesus is the way to be friends with God. He shows people God's love, and attracts them to himself by it. He brings the very best kind of light into people's dark lives.

## Fairy light washing line (10 minutes)



**You will need:** a string of fairy lights hung across a room, luggage tags, pens, washing line pegs, music (optional)

**1** Read from John 1:3–5: 'Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' Say that this passage describes Jesus as the one who brings light to the dark places, and says that no amount of darkness can put his light out. It is a message of hope to us when things feel too dark to be overcome.

**2** Ask the group to consider where they think Jesus' light most needs to bring hope. Turn on the fairy lights, and turn off the main lights of the room if possible. You might want to play some background music.

**3** Invite them to take some tags and write down the dark places or situations where they want to ask Jesus to bring his light. As they write them down, invite the group to peg up the tags onto the line as an act of prayer.



## Prayer glow sticks (5 minutes)



**You will need:** Glow sticks – if you are running a party online, these can be sent out in packs beforehand

**1** Give out the glow sticks, asking people to hold off snapping them until everyone has them.

**2** 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.

**3** Explain that we can talk to God in just the same way that we might talk to a friend who is sitting next to us. Encourage them to snap the glow sticks and talk to God about those places they have thought of where they might need his light.

**4** 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!'

## Candle prayer jars (10 minutes)



**You will need:** glass jars, strips of coloured tissue paper, PVA glue, pens, battery-powered tea lights

**1** Read John 1:1–5, 9–13 and ask the group to consider what words in the passage feel most important to them.

**2** Explain that you're going to make candle holders to help you pray. Ask the group to write the words from the passage that feel important, as well as other words that give them hope, onto the strips of coloured tissue paper. Ask the group to glue these strips of paper with the words of light and hope around a glass jar.

**3** Give each group member a tea light to put inside their jar, and explain that Jesus' light is a promise of hope to those who need it (like we all do at times). The jars are to take away and use to help us pray when we feel like we, or those we love, need light and hope.

# 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. Provide water, squash 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!



## Firework treats

If you're having a firework party, then serve hotdogs, with onions and ketchup. Burgers are also a popular option. You could have other bonfire-night treats, such as toffee apples, parkin or treacle toffee.

## 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!



# Finish well

Just as first impressions count, last impressions are important too. If an event fizzles out, it leaves a negative memory in the minds of children, young people and their families.



Choose an all-together activity to finish your party, so that you end with a feeling of community. Make a point of saying goodbye to everyone individually, so that each child or young person feels valued by the team. If families arrive to pick their children up, introduce yourself and have a quick chat about what's been happening at the party.

Give out copies of *Who is the Light?* (for 5- to 8-year-olds) or *What Do you Do when Darkness Comes to Visit?*

(for those over 8). If possible, have something else to invite people to, particularly if you're aiming your party or event at those from outside your church community. It could be something as soon as a bonfire night party, or you could let them know about what's happening at your church at Christmas. Consider creating an event especially for those who have come to your Light Party, so that you can carry on building a sense of community.



# How can we help?

We hope you've found your *Light Party Pack* really helpful as you seek to reach out to the children and young people in your local community.

Scripture Union's vision is to see a **new generation of children and young people who have a vibrant, personal faith in Jesus**. We believe this is a vision that God has called us to partner with the local church in – **local churches like yours who are** key in sharing the gospel with children and young people not in church (estimated to be a staggering 95% of under-18s in England and Wales).

**Supporting and equipping churches is where Scripture Union's heart lies, and we want to lighten the load for your church as you seek to fulfil your mission to children and young people.**

## RESOURCES

We have a dedicated team creating new resources and developing new models of mission, and they are also working to improve and refine our existing resources to make them as effective as possible. We're increasingly trying to offer many of these resources for free so that they are available for everyone to use.

[su.org.uk/resources](https://su.org.uk/resources)



Together, let's share the good news of Jesus with the next generation.

## REGIONAL WORKERS

Across England and Wales we have 21 wonderful mission enablers, each with a passion and remit for supporting churches in reaching out to the children and young people in their communities. These mission enablers can provide free training and advice, and also help you connect with other local churches so you can benefit from working together. They'd also love to meet you for a coffee and simply be a listening ear to bounce ideas off.

[su.org.uk/localsupport](https://su.org.uk/localsupport)



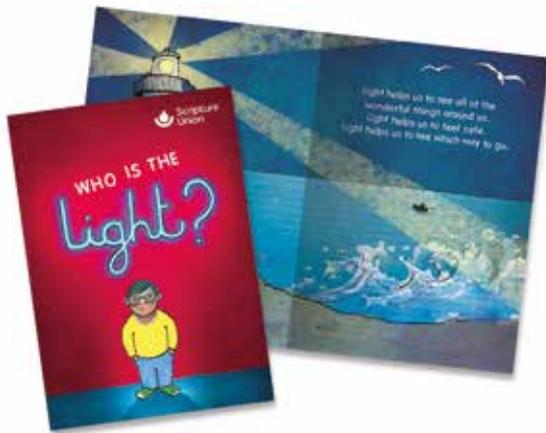
## SU HOLIDAYS

We provide a wide range of holidays for 8- to 18-year-olds, and, even with the COVID-19 restrictions, we have still been able to run holidays online this year. Our hope and prayer is that on these holidays, as well as having lots of fun and making new friends, each child will have the opportunity to explore the Bible, grow in faith and respond to Jesus. These holidays have played a huge part in the faith journey of thousands of young lives already. Perhaps the young people you're engaging with would also benefit.

[su.org.uk/holidays-events](https://su.org.uk/holidays-events)



For more information on how you and your church can get involved with SU visit [su.org.uk/church](https://su.org.uk/church)



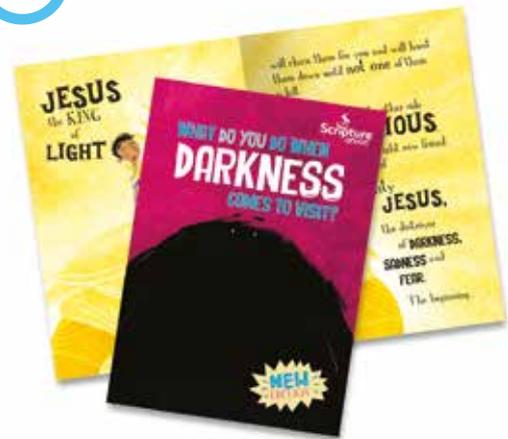
## WHO IS THE LIGHT?

Presents Jesus as the Light of the World and how those who follow him are called to be like light too. Ideal for children aged 5 to 8.



## WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN DARKNESS COMES TO VISIT?

Invites children to discover Jesus as the Light of the World, who is able to overcome darkness, sadness and fear. This revised version is aimed at those aged 8 to 11.



These 20-page evangelistic booklets are ideal for introducing Jesus to children using the themes of darkness and light.

They are great for:

- giving to children who come trick or treating
- giving away at your Light event
- using as an evangelistic tool in your service

Order from Scripture Union:  
**01908 856000**

or order online:  
**[www.lightparty.org.uk](http://www.lightparty.org.uk)**

PACK OF  
10 ONLY

**£4.99**

