

# Our Calling



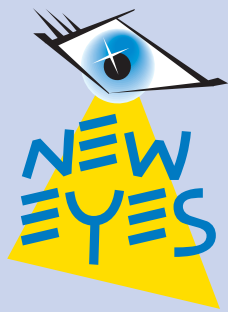
**A project for children's groups,  
linked to *Our Calling*.**

**New Eyes is a new way of doing and new way of seeing children's work in the church and of seeing the church in children's work.**

**It is suitable for churches and groups that have many children and churches which have few children.**

- Sunday groups
- JMA groups
- Uniformed organisations
- Midweek clubs

**It contains games and craft suggestions, ideas for bible work, possibilities for church family away days and ways for all ages in the church to live as disciples in worship and mission.**



# Welcome

Welcome to New Eyes, a new way of doing and new way of seeing children's work in the church and of seeing the church in children's work.

The suggestions in this booklet can be used as part of the Methodist *Our Calling* process which assists us to look again at our response to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

New Eyes is not, however, confined to the *Our Calling* vision. For at its most fundamental level, this book is about how adults in churches listen to what children are saying to us about themselves, their lives, their church and their world. Any church or group can use the suggestions and activities in the book to help them hear what children are saying.

## Why New Eyes?

Jesus says that we must 'turn and become like a child' if we are to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. To become like children, we have to listen to them, and when we do, children can give us New Eyes and save us from missing part of the picture. This is an enjoyable and rewarding process. The reason we don't do very much of it is clearly not because there is no pleasure in it. So why do we avoid listening to children? Do we think perhaps Jesus was wrong? Do adults have more important things to do? Do we perhaps secretly think children don't have anything important to offer?

## Yes to New Eyes

When you look at the New Eyes logo, the word *yes* stands out. This is a *yes* to the gifts and insights that children bring to life in general and church in particular. Our hope is that New Eyes will not simply be a project,

which children's groups and churches engage in for a limited period, but will bring New Eyes to our whole way of being church.

## How to use this material

Just like the previous Methodist Children's Projects, Stargazers and Timetravellers, New Eyes is totally flexible in its approach.

- You can pick up different activities as part of a normal programme. The games and craft work always lead easily into reflection with the children on what insights the activity has provoked. *Games and craft ideas are included.*
- You may like to devote a church family weekend or away day to New Eyes or it can be used over a series of sessions, each one building on the previous session. *Material in the form of a framework is included which can be adapted to either of these models.*
- It can be used in conjunction with the Methodist Church *Our Calling* process or it can be used as a way of listening to and including children in a more general way in church life. *A child-friendly New Eyes approach to Our Calling is included.*
- It can be used as part of worship and Bible study. *Inter-active Bible study material is included which can be done with all-ages.*

For more information on New Eyes, or if you have any comments or queries, or if you would like to share something you have done, please contact

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New Eyes was written and edited by Leslie Noon.

Thanks to Steve Pearce for the New Eyes Bible Study and Muriel Barrett for many of the craft activities. The New Eyes working group consisted of: John Claydon, Luke Curran, Tim Guy, Judy Jarvis, Leslie Noon, Steve Pearce, Colin Raistrick.

Special thanks to the members of the 2002 District JMA and Children's Consultation for their work on a child-friendly translation of *Our Calling*.

# New Eyes Bible Study

These suggestions for learning from the Bible will work well with groups of children, young people or adults as well as in groups of mixed ages.

*The theme of New Eyes can be explored biblically in at least three ways:*

- By taking one of the healing stories in which Jesus helps blind people to see,
  - The healing of the two blind men, Matthew 9:27-31,
  - Man blind, dumb and possessed, Matthew 12:22, Luke 11:14,
  - Bartimaeus (and another blind man), Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-52, Luke 18:35-43,
  - Blind man at Bethsaida, Mark 8:22-26,
  - Man born blind, John 9.
- By exploring one of the parables that Jesus told in order to help all of us see in a new way,
  - Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11-32,
  - Good Samaritan, Luke 10:30-37.
- By examining the way Jesus talks of children and the way in which they help us to see and be part of the Kingdom of God,
  - Jesus and the children, Matthew 18:1-5 & 19:13-15, Mark 9:33-37 & 10:13-16, Luke 9:46-48 & 18:15-17.

## Preparation

Identify the main three or four characters or groups of people in the story.

- For Jesus and the children this might be Jesus, the disciples, the parents and the children.
- In the Bartimaeus story perhaps: Bartimaeus, Jesus, the crowd and possibly the disciples. (You might add the Pharisees with an adult Bible study group.)
- The Prodigal Son (or The Loving Father) has three obvious characters, the two sons and the father, but there is also a mother and friends of the sons, and one wonders what the neighbours would have been saying to each other...

Decide whether you will read the story from the Bible, retell it in your own words or use one of the paraphrased or children's versions.

## Learning in a small group

1. Read the story out loud.
2. Describe the main characters or groups.
3. Invite each individual to decide which of these they want to be. (There is of course no reason why they can't imagine another character or just imagine themselves there, observing.)
4. Ask everyone to imagine themselves present in the story, as far as they can. Closing eyes and a short period of relaxation may help.
5. This time begin by briefly setting a scene for the story (hot/cool, crowded/quiet, village/countryside, etc.)
6. Read the story again.
7. Invite people to share some of their experiences of being in the story, either in threes or all together if your group is small.
8. Useful questions for the group might be:  
What did you particularly notice that you hadn't seen before?  
What seems important about the story?  
Is there anything you want to ask or tell one of the other characters?
9. Especially if your group is not just adults, move on fairly quickly to the final stage which is to offer creative ways for everyone to express their answers and the feelings they had as a character in the story using words, paint, clay, collage, etc. Further talking or a walk may be a creative option for some people.

## Learning in a large group such as a congregation

1. Having read the story and described the main characters, divide the people into three or four groups and give each group one of the characters or groups you have identified.
2. After the second reading ask the groups (who may need to split up into groups of six or so) to talk together about their character. Some groups may wish to draw, paint or act out their answers.
3. What is the most significant part of the story for their character? Why?
4. What question or comment do they have for each of the other characters?
5. As a large group share the answers to the first two questions.
6. Let the groups share in turn their response to the third question and give time for groups to answer any questions that are put to them.



# New Eyes Framework

## Framework

The framework outlined on these pages will help to develop thinking about the worship and mission of YOUR church. This framework may be different however from what you have done before, because it assumes that all ages will be taking part and is geared appropriately.

For most churches, including all ages in this type of thinking will be a new development. It will take some adjustment, because often in church small groups of people hold power and change is often viewed suspiciously.

The framework is based on the *pastoral cycle*, a way of engaging people of any and all ages and any and all abilities in the work of actually *doing* theology. It can be an exciting way of moving forward because it takes people's experience seriously and links church to every day life.

**Begin** by organising a church family event.

**Explore** by thinking about the life of your church and community.

**Reflect** through worship and Bible study ensuring all ages are included.

**Respond** by developing 'SMART' proposals that are based on the experience and study of the church family.

The framework should sit lightly on whatever you do. Use it in whatever way best suits your church's circumstances. It can be adapted to a church family weekend, a series of sessions or a one-off event.

At the end of the process, whatever that maybe, the aim is to grasp a vision of how your church could change so that God's mission makes a difference where you are. It should be a vision that people of all ages have contributed to.

## Begin

*Aim: to enable members of the church family to get to know each other a little better, by sharing in a social occasion and enjoying some of the talents of a few members.*

- Set up an **all-age** planning group to organise a social event. Many people within and on the edge of the church will have skills in organising some sort of family party, skills that may not have been used in a church context before. Their task is to organise an event for the **whole** church family with the aim of 'getting to know', 'sharing in a social' and 'enjoying talents'.
- You may like to link the event to a particular occasion, such as harvest, bonfire night, Christmas, New Year or St Valentine's day. Or you may like to link it to your church anniversary. Think about having a do-it-yourself concert or talent show as part of the evening. Organise some simple all-age games and quizzes.
- If you feel your church has few or no children, consider involving groups that are connected with your church, such as toddler, uniformed or sports groups. If your church has smaller numbers of a particular age group, this may be a good opportunity to make contact with other community groups.

## Explore

*Aim: to consider who contributes what in the life of our church and to present the vision of Our Calling, enthusing the church about the possibilities.*

- Use some of the games and craft ideas in this booklet to enable children to explore how they are or would like to be engaged in the life of your church.
- In children's groups (or with all ages) become Church Detectives, finding out more details about your church, the congregation and the community in which you are. The New Eyes Detective pages offer a variety of suggestions and ideas.
- Plan an act of all age worship, (including all ages in the planning of the service). Suitable readings include 'the call of Samuel', 'who is the greatest', 'let the children come to me'. Use drama or other participative techniques. The New Eyes Bible Study pages offer various ways into this.
- Continue the getting to know you process begun at the church family event. Reflect on how social occasions bring us into a relationship with God; how worship deepens our relationship with God; and how business and other committees help us to do God's mission in the world. Think about who usually participates in these different aspects of church life. What people are excluded from them? Why is this so? Are there ways of doing things that would enable more people to own what is going on in church and to

participate better in your church's mission and activities?

- Interview one another about past highlights and future hopes. Bring mementoes to illustrate the church's history (service sheets, JMA medals etc). Bring toys or symbols of play, work and leisure activities to share what it is that we like doing.



## Reflect

*Aim: to absorb the vision of Our Calling for your church and express responses in a variety of ways.*

- Together with children, write age-related versions of *Our Calling*. Then, using the new questions and statements that have been created, begin to think them through with children, young people, adults and mixed age groups. Alternatively, use the child-friendly version of *Our Calling* in the middle of this booklet. There is a lot to tackle, so don't try to do it all at once! Take one question or one section at a time.
- Take the child-friendly version of *Our Calling* to home and Bible study groups and study it there. Use the New Eyes Bible Study approach as a way into this.
- Dramatise the *Our Calling* questions, or create dance, song, pictures, collages based on the questions of 'good and bad things about our church'.
- What images best represent your church? Give examples such as 'my church is like a bus'. Draw images, take photos of objects, bring in objects from home.
- Create visual representations for worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism.

## Respond

*Aim: to develop 'SMART' proposals based on the experience and study of the church family.*

**S** specific  
**M** measurable  
**A** achievable  
**R** realistic  
**T** time related

- Involve all age groups in the formulation and selection of the proposals.
- Prioritise the proposals.
- Make sure at least one is done almost immediately, at least one could be achieved in two to three months and another that could be completed in twelve months.
- If you have a mission statement, consider whether the proposals fit within it. If not, which needs to change?
- Decide which proposal needs to go to which group for a decision.
- Decide what to do with any proposals that are not to be taken forward.

## And then...

- Send feedback to the Children's Section (details on page 2) so that stories can be shared across the Connexion.
- Use the lessons you have learned about including children and others in the process to enable you to be a more inclusive church from now on.
- At an agreed time, organise a follow up church family event, and consider beginning the cycle again. Mission and the work of God does not stand still....

**Overleaf is a child-friendly approach to *Our Calling*. Members of the Children's and JMA District Secretaries' Consultation looked at the *Our Calling* document and worked together to interpret it in such a way to enable children to be part of the reflection and action.**

**Use this paraphrase in a form that suits your own circumstances. Alternatively, work with children in your church so that they interpret *Our Calling* for themselves and then work with others to explore and reflect on the questions they raise.**



## Worship

*At Church we come together to praise God and remember that God loves us all.*

- What are the good things and bad things about the church service?
- What could be done to make church better for you?
- How do you know God is with you? When and where do we feel closest to God? Does this happen during the service?
- How do we learn about stories of the Bible. Why do we about learn them?
- How can we help people to know that God is special?
- If you bring a friend to church, how can we help them to understand what is going on?
- If 'Changing Rooms' came to our church, what would you want them to do? Think about all people who may come to church and what they need.
- What do we like about being in church? What would make it even better?
- Jesus invites you to a party each Sunday. Is that how it feels to you? What fresh ideas would you bring to make a difference?



## Learning and Caring

*Our Church helps us to learn from each other and help each other to be better Christians.*

- What things do we like doing at Church?
- How do we know that Jesus is with us every day?
- How can we be more friendly at church and outside church?
- Do people notice if we're happy or sad? How do we notice how other people are feeling?
- What do we do at church that helps us learn about God?
- How does what you learn at church make a difference in your life?
- How can we learn about being a Christian from other people in the world?
- How can we find time in our lives to learn about God?
- Why do we go to church? Why is it important to have friends at church?
- How do you help and care for your friends at church? How does the minister help your group?



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## Service

*Our Church helps us to be good friends and help when things aren't fair.*

- Who needs help where we live?
- Who helps people and how can we help?
- Why do we think that things aren't fair in our world?
- What can we do when things aren't fair?
- How do we learn about people in other parts of the world?
- What happens at our church that helps people?
- Who do we pray for?
- What charities do we support? What charities could we decide to support if we don't already?
- How is our collection spent?



## Evangelism

*Our Church helps more people to follow Jesus.*

- How can we be friends with everyone?
- How can people know that we are followers of Jesus?
- What is the most important thing we want to tell people about God?
- What is the most important thing we want people to know about our church?
- How can we tell people about Jesus?
- How can we tell our friends about Jesus?
- How do we want our church to look?
- What might make more people come to our church?
- What event could we organise and invite our friends to?

Calling

# New Eyes Games and Crafts

If you ask a child what they enjoy doing in their group (whether it meets on a Sunday or during the week), most will include playing games and making things.

These activities focus on co-operating (stressing the importance of all working together), seeing (picking up the New Eyes title) and listening (picking up the theme of hearing what children are saying). It is important that the activities are not done in isolation but that links are made to enable children (and the whole church) to reflect on how important it is that all people, including children are included and listened to so that the church can see through their eyes.

## Co-operative activities

### All Tied Up

Children stand in a circle close to each other and stretch out their arms into the middle. Each child then takes hold of the hand of someone across the circle. (Make sure that children are not holding both hands of the same person.) Without letting go of each other's hands they must try to untie the tangle themselves. (Take care that arms are not twisted too much.) When they are all untied you should end up with one large circle or two smaller circles.

### Eyes, Body, Voice

Split the children into groups of three. Two in each group are blindfolded, the third is permitted to see. One of the blindfolded children is the "body"; they can move but cannot see or speak. The other blindfolded child is the "voice", who can speak but can neither see nor move. The third is the "eyes", and can see but can't speak or move.

For each group, place a ball somewhere within the playing area. Also place one chair somewhere in the playing area. Each group's goal is to guide their "body" to their team's ball, pick it up, and then place it on a chair. The "voice" and the "eyes" for each team will have to give the "body" directions to find the ball. This is much more difficult than it sounds as the "eyes" and "voice" need to be able to effectively communicate with each other in order to give directions to the "body". A great communication game!

### Hula Hoops

For this game you will need two hoops. All participants join hands and form a circle. Two participants drop hands and put their arms through one hoop each. They then join hands again. The hoops are then dangling from their arms.

The objective of the game is to send the hoops completely around the circle in opposite directions and return them to the starting point without releasing hands. This means that each person has to go through the hoops as they make their way around the circle. One of the hoops will also have to travel through the other hoop. You cannot use your fingers at all! It takes co-operation with your partners. Once experienced, you could add more hula hoops!

### Keep It Up

Blow up one or more balloons, depending on the number of participants. The simple goal is to work together and keep the balloon in the air. Try it with participants standing, (or sitting), in a circle. You can add challenge for the group by restricting how they may burst the balloon — for example, don't let them use their hands; or use only their elbows.

### Musical Chairs (co-operative)

No one is eliminated in this variation, but it is similar to the original. To begin, set up of two lines of chairs back-to-back, with one chair less than the number of players. After each round another chair is removed. For each round play music while children walk (dance, march) around the chairs. When the music stops everyone tries to find a seat. With a decreasing number of chairs available each, participants need to work together to find room for everyone. This may mean sitting on laps and sharing chairs.

## Seeing activities

### Coloured glasses

Give each child a piece of card with an outline of an eye mask/large pair of glasses. These should have frames that are large enough to decorate (and that are the right size). Stick pieces of coloured cellophane to the back of each eye hole. (Cellophane and pre-cut masks are available from Baker Ross, 0870 241 1867 or [www.bakerross.co.uk](http://www.bakerross.co.uk)). Attach elastic to the sides of the glasses. When worn, these glasses will give a different view of the world.

### Binoculars

Collect enough toilet roll middles for every child to have two each. Allow them to paint each roll or decorate with sticky shapes or glitter glue. When dry, staple the rolls side by side, and then staple string so that they can hang around the neck. Hey presto! Binoculars.

### Telescope

These can be made in a similar way to the binoculars, but with longer, thinner cardboard tubes, such as kitchen paper rolls. For a simple version, allow each child to have one tube which

they decorate. When they hold it up to one eye, they have a telescope. For more complicated telescopes, fit a smaller cardboard roll into a slightly larger one.

### I Spy

A simple old favourite, depending on children seeing and observing. For junior age children, play in the normal way using letters of the alphabet. For younger children, use colours.

### Wink murder

This game depends on children being able to use their eyes to wink, and on being observant. Children stand in a circle. Choose one child to be the detective, who leaves the room while you choose another child to be the murderer. The detective comes back in and stands in the middle of the circle. The murderer then proceeds to 'murder' the other children by winking at them. They of course have to be observant, without looking obviously at the murderer. When murdered, they can die loudly and dramatically, falling to the ground. The detective, with three guesses only, must identify who is the murderer.

## Listening activities

### Sleeping Pirate

All the children (except one - the pirate) sit on the floor in a circle. The pirate sits in the middle of the circle, blindfolded, with a large bunch of keys on the floor in front of her/him. A child is nominated to creep up and take the keys and then return to their place, without the pirate hearing them. The pirate must listen hard and has three goes to point to where (s)he thinks the raider is. If (s)he is successful, the raider becomes the pirate.

### Barn Yard

Each child is privately assigned to one of four animal groups: either a dog, cat, cow or mouse. Once all have been assigned an animal the group is blindfolded or asked to close their eyes, hands up as bumpers. Children are challenged to form their animal groups without talking, they can only make the proper animal noise to locate the others in their group.

### Panpipes

Using plastic straws (either brightly coloured ones or wider ones), each child should cut straws of different lengths eg 3cms, 5cms, 7cms etc. (For younger children, you may wish to pre-



cut them). Each child should have between 5 and 7 different graded lengths. Using a strip of masking tape, carefully lay the cut straws onto the masking tape, leaving a small gap in between each straw. This would be best done in pairs, one child helping the other. *It is important that the tops of the straws are level and that straws are placed in order of size.* The masking tape should then be wrapped around and pressed in between each straw to hold them securely in place. To play the pan-pipes, hold to the bottom lip and blow over the top. Each straw should make a different sound, depending on its length. You may wish to borrow a set of real panpipes or play some panpipe music (easily available from most music shops).



# New Eyes Detectives

## Preparation

Children can be detectives over a period of weeks or this activity could be done in one session. Be as imaginative and elaborate as is necessary. Make it fun to do! This could also be turned into an all-age activity – part of worship or another event.

To make the 'game' more authentic, provide various equipment for each child:

- A warrant card (on which each child can draw themselves or stick on a photo).
- A special little notebook in which they can write what they find.

## Interview Suspects

Invite members of the congregation to be suspects. In small groups, enable the children to interview the suspects. Some children will find this easy, others might need a written list of questions which they can ask. The aim of the interview is to discover more about what the church is for. Questions that could be asked are:

- Why do you come to church on Sunday?
- Why do you think other people come to church?
- What do you think the church is for?
- What is the most important thing about church?
- What does the church do?
- How might other people know that you are a follower of Jesus?

## Investigate the Building

In small groups, (ensuring safeguarding good practice is followed) let the children explore the church. Encourage them to see it with *new eyes*. Aspects for them to consider are:

- What the different rooms used for?
- How do you know it's a church?
- How is it different from other buildings?
- Do all the rooms look well-cared for?
- What could be done to make it better?
- Can people in wheelchairs or parents with babies in pushchairs use the building?

## Study the evidence

Get copies of church magazines, notices, committee agendas, reports and other written information. If your church has a website, arrange to have a computer with the website downloaded.

- What does the evidence tell us about our church?
- What activities take place on the church premises?
- What other activities is the church involved in?

## Findings and Conclusion

Older children might enjoy writing up their findings in imaginative ways. They could produce a newspaper, a factsheet or a piece of drama. For younger children or those that enjoy this type of activity less, keep this part simple. It might be possible to make a scrap book with some of their findings. Key questions to be answered are:

- What is the church for?
- What does my church do?
- Why do people come to church?
- What is the one most important thing to tell our friends about church?

## Church Detective Agency

This is to certify that

.....  
is officially a Church Detective  
**and is entitled to look for clues,  
interview suspects, go undercover  
and generally investigate.**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### Dos and Don'ts for Church Detectives:

- 1 Be alert at all times. all details are important.
- 2 Be polite and friendly to all suspects, putting them at their ease.
- 3 Pay attention to your investigations and write up your findings

# Further Detective Work

## Preparation

It is surprising to find out how little we often know about the people who are in our church and the community in which we live.

If we really want to take the worship and mission of our church seriously, it might be worth investigating further. The suggestions on this page are suitable for all-ages working together.

Here are some ideas of questions and statistics that could be undertaken. In some cases it is a matter of counting, others may need a questionnaire completed.

There are some excellent websites for finding out information on your local community. Try [www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk) and [www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001) Also, local councils usually have good websites. In addition, local libraries can be helpful.

You may not wish to research all these issues – select the ones which you feel will be of most use.

## Community Profile

- Total population
- Dominant age group
- Approx % of age-ranges
- Approx % in ethnic groups
- Approx % in employment
- Unemployment rate
- Approx % house ownership
- Approx % in housing types (eg semi, flat)
- Where do people meet in the area?
- What are local attitudes to police, education, church, race relations?
- Are there any particular issues or tensions in the local community?
- What common interest groups are there in the area?
- Have there been significant changes in the last ten years?
- Are there any major impending developments?
- What are the significant issues in the local press?
- Is there a shared sense of community?

## Church Profile

- Average Sunday attendance
- Dominant age group
- Approx % of age-ranges
- Approx % by gender
- Approx % in ethnic groups
- Approx % in housing types (eg semi, flat)
- How long adults have attended this church
- What % of congregation live within the area
- Observable recent trends in church membership
- Main church activities and groups
- Committees and leadership in the church
- Objectives for mission and ministry. Are these stated or implicit?
- Relations to other churches in the area
- Significant events in the church's story
- What the church thinks of itself
- Plans for the future

Illustrate your findings using drawings, pictures, graphs and displays.

**When you have assembled a clearer picture of your church and community, in groups of mixed ages and interests, consider what opportunities there are for mission and worship in your church.**



When you look at the New Eyes logo, the word yes stands out. This is a yes to the gifts and insights that children bring to life in general and church in particular. Our hope is that New Eyes will not simply be a project, which children's groups and churches engage in for a limited period, but will bring New Eyes to our whole way of being church. The book includes

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Pages 4-5	New Eyes Framework
Pages 6-7	New Eyes on <i>Our Calling</i>
Pages 8-9	New Eyes Games and Crafts
Pages 10-11	New Eyes Detectives

For more copies of this New Eyes book (ref GE233) please contact:

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If you have any questions about New Eyes or if you have stories to share about how you are listening to and including children in your church please contact:

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The **Methodist** Church 

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