



2025 UnitingWorld Sunday

Children's Talk Options

Choose one of these ideas, or create your own talk based on the UnitingWorld Sunday theme of care for the earth and for our global neighbours.

STORY – The Concrete Garden by Bob Graham

Background: Bob Graham wrote *The Concrete Garden* during COVID, when he watched children in his neighbourhood emerge to play for an hour in the afternoon outside after being confined to their homes for school during lockdown. He was struck by the simple things they did to amuse themselves – bikes, chalk, jumps, skipping – and it reminded him of his own childhood. In the middle of a time of great uncertainty and despair he was heartened by the simple creativity and community that children engage in spontaneously.

Themes: Renewal, creativity of children, collaboration, hope

Read a physical copy of the book to the congregation, or watch a reading of the story here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw3kzC4wzXw>

Discussion framework:

This story is about a group of children who've been inside for a long cold winter. Maybe they've been feeling a bit down and frustrated about not being able to play together. But then they all go outside and one girl brings something a bit different – chalk. She has a cool idea to draw on the hard cold concrete.

Do you remember the name of the girl who brought the chalk? Have you ever been the first person to start something new that everyone else got involved in? How did that feel? (Talk up taking risks, leading others, it starts with one person, etc.)

Look at the difference the chalk drawings have made and all the different creative bits the children have added. What do you think made the whole project such a success? (Talk up everyone having something to add, collaboration, community and creativity)

Remember the part in the story when Nasrin is up in the building looking down and takes a picture of the concrete garden to send to her mum? Her mum loves it and sends the picture to everyone she knows! *Why do you think she did that? Have you ever loved something so much*

you've wanted to share it with everyone you knew? (**Talk up** the power of hope when it's shared; how much we're encouraged by others who see and notice what we're doing)

Let's look at this page where it begins to rain and all the hard work of the children gets washed away. How do you think they might have been feeling? (Upset but...)

When we turn the page, we discover they're not too bothered! What do they do instead? (They use the same box from before and come up with another creative idea! They don't give up but are able to see a new way of doing things)

Isn't it amazing how they came up with another good idea using the same box that held the chalk and were able to have fun and create something completely new again!

Today in Church we're talking about how people all around the world can easily feel like that group of children coming down out of their big buildings – they're a bit down and frustrated because there are lots of difficult things happening in the world. One really major problem many people face is changes to the climate that make it more difficult to grow food, find clean water and survive disasters like floods, droughts, and cyclones.

Our Church is supporting people in churches around the world like Amanda who have good ideas and are able to lead others to make amazing changes! If we were going to use the children in this story as an example to encourage our church and other churches around the world, what are some of the things we might learn from the children's example about creating change even when things can be difficult?

Some ideas:

- It only takes one person to have a good idea. Others will follow and add their own bits.
- When we all work together we can create something really special. When we share that with others, people feel even more hopeful and they'll pass it on – like Nasrin's mum who sent the picture.
- When something challenging happens, like the rain coming in the story and washing away all our work, it's natural to feel upset. But like Amanda and her friends, we have to be creative and look for the next solution. At the end of the day, this is the planet we live on and it's up to all of us to work together to find creative ways to look after it, to include each other in our ideas and action and to share hope

That's what UnitingWorld does with Churches around the world, and it's what we're celebrating today.

Sourced from Cath Taylor, UnitingWorld

Any queries, email info@unitingworld.org.au

ACTIVITY - Life Affirming Generosity

Need:

4 gluten-free nut-free gifts (small packet of sweets, small toys)

Something that you like but that a limited number of other people would like

[Depending on the audience, you may want to organize four participants in advance.]

Offer each person a gift demonstrating different attitudes of giving...

Reluctantly

(e.g. you don't really deserve this, I don't really want to give this to you)

With conditions

(e.g. you can only eat one a day, you can only play with it on Wednesday afternoons)

Kindly

(like you really want to give it and that you care about the receiver)

Kindly, but then rethink and take it back, so they end up with nothing.

Discussion – which gift was more generous? Why do you think that? Why might it be...?

So, what I am hearing is that a gift given freely, without conditions, is most generous. OK... let me think about this....

[The twist]

Well, I really like [the other gift], so I would like to give this gift. (Give it to someone unlikely to like this thing)

Discussion – How generous was that? Why not?

Generosity also means giving someone what THEY would like or need, not just what YOU like.

God calls us to be generous, but part of being generous can be giving someone a voice.... Listening to them about what they need and want and responding to that. That is how UnitingWorld works. We ask people what they need from us, and then we provide it.

May we be truly generous in our actions.

Sourced from Rev Josie Neuendorff, Chermside Kedron Community Church

Any queries, email info@unitingworld.org.au

STORY – Shoes from Grandpa

Aimed at mid-primary school aged children and younger.

Read the book *Shoes from Grandpa* by Mem Fox as a group or to the group.

A read-along video can be found on Youtube <https://youtu.be/NjXKKMWtcpw>

Encourage children to say the repeated lines at the same time as the reader.

Reflect: (a. = answers, but draw out discussion with the group)

In the story, who felt good about the clothes: Jessie or her family?

What was Jessie frustrated about?

- a. *Getting clothes she didn't want / other people making decisions for her.*

(sarcastically) But shouldn't Jessie be happy to get anything? No? Why?

- a. *The clothes weren't right for her/what she liked doing.*

Why weren't the clothes right for Jessie?

- a. *They were assuming they knew what she wanted without asking her.*

What should her family have done instead of buying her what they thought she needed?

- a. *They should have asked her what she liked or needed?*

When you give a friend or family member a gift, it feels good, doesn't it? But do you try to think about things you would like, or things they would like?

Ask if they have given someone a perfect gift. What made it perfect for that person? How did it make you feel?

[If that doesn't work] Ask if they have ever received something they didn't want. How did that make them feel?

What does it mean to be generous? What are some generous acts?

Can generosity hurt you or the people you're trying to help?

- a. *Maybe – if you are giving them things they don't need or want.*

What if you send your old clothes to another country but they aren't right for the climate there?

What if you send old books to another country but they aren't in a language anyone speaks?

READ: At UnitingWorld, we work with people and churches in other countries to help them in lots of ways. Sometimes they need help accessing clean water or toilets, sometimes they need

help to clean up after a cyclone, sometimes they need help running a school for children who otherwise wouldn't be able to go to school.

Q. What do you think UnitingWorld should do if one of our overseas church partners needs our help?

a. Ask what kind of help they might need from us.

READ: The best way for UnitingWorld to work with overseas churches is not to assume we know what they need. We aren't better than them, just because we may have more money or opportunities. We have a lot to learn from them too. They are brave, creative, resilient, and strong in faith.

Just like Jessie, our partners know what they need or how to fix a problem and they just need our friendship and fundraising to make those things happen! Our partners are the local church, helping their communities unlock their God-given potential to set themselves free from poverty and injustice. They know their communities so can see simple, inexpensive solutions that we can't.

Sourced from Mardi Lumsden, UnitingWorld

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