



12. The Great Outdoors!

It's not all about Potholing and Canoeing – there are lots of things to do in the great outdoors with your youth group!

This sheet gives ideas for outdoor activities or activities that take place off your regular premises. Each activity should follow all the Health and Safety, and Child Protection regulations, including a Risk Assessment and consideration to adequate supervision. Some guidance is given on this sheet but more details should be sought from other available Resource Sheets or from other sources, details of which are given below. And because it's so important we'll deal with that first!

Safety First!

- The safety of the young people in your care is a priority in any activity you organise for them – and this is particularly important when you leave the familiarity and safety of your premises.
- Any activity organised should contain a Risk Assessment. Guidance is available on a separate Resource Sheet, and also from HSE. Also look at Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and the Scouting Movement.
- Inform the parents of the young people of the nature of the activity you are planning, and get their permission if you are leaving the site or engaging in what could be seen as a hazardous activity – such things as Outward Bound activities.

- Get any information that you may need – such as dietary requirements, medical information, etc, and keep this with you at all times.
- Have a list of all group members, and regularly check that all are present.
- Have prior knowledge of the venue
- Take all necessary Transport Precautions
- Continuously monitor the appropriateness of the activity
- Clearly understand the emergency procedures and be able to carry them out and have appropriate access to a First Aid Kit
- Ensure that any instructions you give to the young people are clear and understood, including the code of behaviour that they are expected to follow.
- Consider the special needs and requirements of individuals in your group.
- Ensure appropriate supervision of the young people with a good number of adults. This is extremely important. Is it safe and appropriate for your members to be away from the supervisor? For example, in such activities as a shopping trip, orienteering, and treasure hunt. This does not mean that there is no supervisions, but that it is remote: the supervisors whereabouts is known. Remember, there are different kinds and levels of supervision according the activity. Are the leaders qualified to lead/supervise the activity planned?
- Get the permission of others. For example, you may need to consult with the local authority or the police if you are planning certain activities.
- When planning your activity, take into account the members of the public with whom the young people will come into contact
- Child Protection Procedures should be adhered to at all times.
- When staying overnight ensure the young people are safe and secure
- Have a fully charged Mobile Phone with Call time!

- Remember to take the necessary precautions on Coastal Visits and activities near Water
- Remember the Countryside Code:
Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs; Leave gates and property as you find them; Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home; Keep dogs under close control; Consider other people

A to Z!

Here is an A – Z of suggested activities to get you going!

Adventure

There are many Adventure Activity Centres around. If you have one close by it may be possible to arrange a day or evening of activities. Ensure the Centre and activities offered are licensed and insured by the Adventure Activity Licensing Authority and that the parents are aware of the nature of the activity to which they are giving permission. Take into consideration any special needs of individuals.

Barbecue

Always a fun favourite! It can be as simple or elaborate as you like. Ensure you follow the guidelines and regulations of Food Hygiene and Safety.

Beach Walk

Go to your local beach. Talk as you walk. Have fun games and activities. Connect with the seaside and shore side stories of Jesus. Read the Gospel. As with all activities close to or involving water, follow the guidelines. A useful document is Group Safety at Water Margins from the Department for Education and Skills.

Camping

An obvious outdoor activity that can be a good team builder. Ensure that your camp is safely laid out and run. An obvious group to consult is the Scouting Movement, who have fact sheets and advice, as well as trained leaders who may be able to assist you.

Car Wash

Car washing can be a fun way of raising money – either for your youth group, church or other good cause.

Christmas Carols

Sing outside your church or at a local supermarket or town square and enjoy the festive cheer! Make sure the young people wear something warm!

Digital Photography

Armed with digital cameras, give the young people a theme on which to take photographs. Then make them into a visual meditation. Accompany it with words and music. A useful resource is

www.scoutbase.org.uk/library/hqdocs/facts/pdfs/jessops.pdf

Envelopes!

Could the young people be involved in such things as Christian Aid Week, delivering the envelopes, and helping to count the money when they've been collected? Remember that anyone under the age of 16 years must be accompanied by an adult when collecting money or fund-raising.

Fireworks

Why restrict fireworks to November 5th – they have long been part of celebrations on Christian festivals! Follow the Firework code! Check out www.hse.gov.uk/explosives/fireworks and www.dti.gov.uk/fireworks which both give advice on safety issues or 'Giving your own firework display' published by HSE at £5.75 (ISBN 0717608360)

Ground Force!

Have a clean up of the church grounds or surrounding area. Or why not do a Ground Force and transform an area with a bit of Gardening?

Graveyard Antics

Why not make the most of your churchyard? Use it as a means to explore the issues of death, bereavement, eternal life, heaven, the supernatural, etc. Associate it with

Halloween – All Saints and All Souls. Be sensitive of any young people who are dealing with bereavement, etc. Clean the Graveyard up, take charcoal rubbings, have a treasure hunt, and so on.

Historical Walk!

Every area has a history of its own. Are there any historical Christian sites or features in your area? Even street names have a story to tell! Follow safety procedures. Follow the Green Cross Code.

House Crawl

Why not meet in one person's house and then travel from house to house until you reach your final destination. Play a game in each house, eat part of a meal, read and discuss a bible passage, have a prayer time, etc. Preparation needs to be done with the parents beforehand and all Child Protection procedures followed.

It's a Knockout

Use the outdoors as an opportunity to have messy games! This can be fun – have a kind of It's a Knockout tournament. Allow them to get wet and messy! It's also the opportunity to have other games which are restricted by your church hall or meeting place – games such as parachute games or relay games, or other Sports such as football and hockey. Assess the risk for each activity.

Jack o Lantern

Halloween is associated in people's minds with ghosts and ghouls and scary things! Why not explore the Christian aspect of Halloween. Have an outdoor procession with lanterns and lights.

Kite Making

Make and fly your own kites. Kite making kits are easily available in Craft Shops, Toy Shops or from the Internet. Incorporate it into a themed workshop.

Leaflet Drop

Get the young people to design their own flyers and leaflets either promoting the work and presence of the local church or raising awareness of certain issues. Then arrange a Leaflet Drop.

Mountain Hike

Have a mountain hike and associate it with Jesus' hilltop experiences – such as the feeding of the five thousand, the Ascension, etc. It is recommended that the session is led by someone with an appropriate NGB qualification. Ensure you know the route and follow all the guidelines. Check out www.scoutbase.org.uk for their factsheets.

Nature Walk

Sometimes we take things for granted. Explore the natural world! Is there an Environmental Centre in your area that could provide activities? Use nature to discuss Creation, God the Creator, Jesus' references to nature, such as the lilies of the field, etc.

Orienteering

Armed with a map and a compass, set up a trail for the young people to find their way around the streets or a forest!

Pentecost Picnic

Have a Pentecost fun day. On the Day of Pentecost, the apostles went out into the street. Why not follow your morning Eucharist with a picnic in the Church grounds. Get the young people to bring their own picnic or provide a barbecue.

Prayer Walk

Take your youth group around your town or village on a prayer walk. Stop along the way at various stations to pray for particular things. Perhaps leave a memento of your stop – such as a prayer card. Follow the Highway Code, provide adequate supervision and plan your route beforehand.

Pilgrimage

You don't have to have a nearby shrine or holy place to have a pilgrimage! Start off somewhere else and make your way to the church or make anywhere your local destination, including your neighbouring parish. If you are walking on roads or streets then ensure you follow the Road Safety Advice, according to the Highway Code. Check out www.rospa.co.uk/roadsafety/advice/walking/charity.htm

Quite Early One Morning

Most people miss the sounds and sensation of an early morning! Why not arrange to meet up, and have an outdoor prayer or bible study session, focussing on the sounds of early morning. Explore issues of rising, new birth, life, nature, creation, etc.

Round the Fire

A nice Summers evening around the campfire can be a fun and relaxing way to spend your time. Lots of discussion! Ensure safety is a priority. Have a fire extinguisher ready and the young people are aware of what to do and not to do!

Shopping Trip

Some young people don't get the chance to go shopping with friends or family. Why not arrange a trip to a city and have fun. Arrange lunch together. Consider the type of supervision you are giving the young people and agree on a code of behaviour expected from them.

Sports

Why allow your church or community hall to restrict your sporting activities? Go outdoors or visit another venue such as a Sports Centre.

Shanty House

Make a shanty house out of refuse items – cardboard boxes, etc. to raise people's awareness of issues in developing countries. Christian Aid will have resources to supplement this.

Stations of the Cross

Have an outdoor Stations of the Cross, either by having various Stations around the outside of the Church Building or stopping at appropriate places around your community. How can particular places correspond with the Stations? Follow Road Safety instructions

Street Survey

Arm your young people with clipboard, pen and questions and get a survey of what local people think about certain issues. Decide what issues and what you are going to do with the figures afterwards. Use them for discussion, debate and action! Consider the supervision given and the safety of the young people if speaking to strangers or members of the public.

Street Art

Any budding artists? Why not take a little evangelistic trip out to your local town and do some pavement chalk art. Check with your Local Authority first.

Swimming

Swimming is a fun activity but needs to be done safely. For advice, check out:

www.rospa.co.uk/waterandleisuresafety/factsheets/children_swimming.htm

Theatre

Street Theatre can be a good way of evangelism! Lots of drama books are available to help you on this one! Find out with the local authority if there are any restrictions on this kind of public entertainment in certain areas.

Under the Stars

Why not take the camping experience one step further and forget the canvas altogether! Look at the weather forecast beforehand and have plan B available for inclement weather. Some Outdoor Centres will be able to arrange this for you, or give you tips and guidelines.

Video

Got a camcorder? When why not make a film, or again film scenes for a meditation, or have a spoof outside broadcast – for fun or for discussion! Interview people on the street.

Worship

You need nice weather for this one! Why not organise an outdoor worship, either a Eucharist or some other kind of worship. See what creative things can happen when released from the restrictions of your church building! Be careful of any electrical equipment you use outdoors, particularly if things get wet. Get an expert to advise you and, if possible, to do it for you.

X marks the Spot!

Organise a Treasure Hunt in your area. This will need to be well prepared though, with adequate provision, safety, and supervision in place.

Youth Group Exchange

Why not team up with or visit another youth group in the diocese? See how the other half live!

Remember, that this Resource Sheet is only designed to give you ideas about Outdoor Activities. It is not exhaustive in terms of Health and Safety. You will need to follow all the necessary precautions and guidelines. The Safety Advice at the beginning is intended only to draw your attention to the issues involved and to direct you to other sources with professional advice. If in doubt, always seek professional advice.

Take care...and have fun!

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