**GROWING TOGETHER:** FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Session 2 of 4

# Stephen and friends

### MEETING AIM

To explore the roles children have (or might have) serving in church.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 6:1-15

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

This session is looking at how Stephen and his friends were chosen to continue the work of the Church and help the apostles. It’s a very practical account of how they were chosen and commissioned, and a helpful introduction to our thinking about the Church today. Often we don’t think about children having a role in the Church to work and contribute, so this session is a fantastic chance to think seriously about children’s contributions to your church. It may even be worth thinking about following their thoughts up with some practical opportunities to input into the life of your local church.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and ask the children to share about the week they have had. If you’d like to slowly introduce the topic you could ask: “Have you ever been chosen for something? Why?” Give some time for the group to think and offer up their answers.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** paper and pens

Explain the situation: there’s a crisis in the world. It’s a mess and things are going from bad to worse. But you have been given a secret mission to change things around. You’ve got some really good news about how to change the world, and your job is to let people know about it and convince people to believe in your solution. And that news…is that Jesus died and rose again. This is the situation that the first Christians found themselves in.

If you were beginning the Church from scratch in a world that didn’t know Jesus, what would be the kind of skills and character traits you would look for in people to be on your mission team?

Ask the group to get into pairs to make a list of the top ten skills and abilities that they would be looking for in their team if they were asked to spread the news about Jesus and begin the Church today.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** copies of the questions below; Bibles

Give the group copies of the following questions (with spaces to answer them) and a pen.

* What were the jobs that Stephen and friends appointed to do?
* How were they chosen?
* What other jobs needed to be done by the apostles?
* How did the apostles prepare these new people for their new jobs?

Now read Acts 6:1-15 to the group, making sure that you read at a good slow pace so that the group can pick out the answers. Ask the group to listen out for answers and write them down. At the end of reading the passage discuss the answers that they wrote down, to help the group learn from each other about what they thought.

Ask the group to imagine they were one of the people chosen. How would they react to what happened to Stephen in verses 8-15?

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

* How is the early Church different to the Church of today?
* How is the early Church similar to the Church of today?
* What are the biggest jobs that the Church needs to do today?
* How can we learn from the early Church?
* Do you think we have jobs to do in the Church and skills to do them?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** a large sheet of paper; felt-tip pens

Explain that together you’re going to explore the question: What are the kinds of things that the Church of today needs to do, and what are the skills needed for them?

On the large sheet of paper, draw out a big table with two columns. Ask the group to think about and list together what they think the jobs of the Church are today in one column. You might want to think of some examples like looking after sick people, being community to lonely people or helping people understand about Jesus more.

Then in the other column, ask the group to think about the kinds of jobs and skills that people will have to do to enable these things to happen.

If you think the group is too large, or if they might concentrate better, split the group into smaller groups to discuss these ideas and then come back together and share their ideas in a big group.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** paper; felt-tip pens

Give each child a piece of paper and some pens. Ask them each to draw a simple picture of themselves on the piece of paper. Let them have fun with it and share their self-portraits if they’d like to.

Then ask the group to think about the things that they are especially good at, and to write those around their portraits on the same piece of paper.

Ask the group to share these things with their friends and if they’re struggling to think of things, they can ask each other for help about what they think their friends are good at. Ask them to discuss these skills with their friends and think about the kinds of ways that they can use these skills to help continue the work of the early Church.

Finally, ask the group to come together in a circle. Explain that in the Bible passage the apostles prayed for the new team members to be ready for their jobs and ministries. It says that they ‘laid…hands’ (v6) on each other. Explain that you’re going to pray for each other that you’d be ready to do the jobs that God gives you to do, using the skills that he has given you. Ask everyone to place a hand on the person on their right’s shoulder and repeat the prayer after you:

Dear God, thank you for [name]. Thank you for the skills that you’ve given them. Help them be ready for the jobs that you give them. Bless their ministry for you and bless your Church through them. Amen.

Having done that, ask them to do the same with the person on their left.

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