



## Resources and ideas for events, celebrations, services and more

### What is Education Sunday?

Education Sunday is on 8 September, 2024. Since 2016 it has been celebrated at the start of the academic year, on the second Sunday in September, but it has been recognised for well over a hundred years in England and Wales. Education Sunday is a day of prayer and celebration for everyone in the world of education. It provides churches with the opportunity to pray for all those who teach, learn and work in schools, colleges and universities in their communities.



Some churches or groups of churches hold a special service where they invite staff and students from local schools to join with them as they give thanks for education in their own communities.

This year's theme is *Learning together: education in our community*. An ecumenical steering group co-ordinated by Churches Together in England produces resources for anyone wishing to mark this special Sunday in their worship, and they can be found here: <https://cte.org.uk/education-sunday/>

### Somewhere to start

Here's a way to introduce the theme.

#### Gather activity

WEA

Display a large map of your town/village/area with all the places of education clearly marked. Include all the schools and, if there is one nearby, the college and/or university.

Display a photograph of each place of learning. Ask people to identify the places. Do they have a connection with any of them? Do they go to one of the schools? Do they work in the college? Do they have family members who are students or staff?

Thank you, God, for all those who work in the schools, (colleges and universities – if appropriate), in our community. We thank you for the gift of learning and the opportunities it offers us to know more about your world and about each other. **Amen.**

### Something from the Bible

See complete Bible notes at [rootsforchurches.com/educationsunday](https://rootsforchurches.com/educationsunday)

#### James 2:1-10,14-17

The letter of James is full of encouragement to live in God's way. In this section, he tells us that everyone in our community is valuable and that we should not make a distinction between rich and poor because God loves everyone. He reminds us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves and to be merciful rather than judgemental.

### A read and share idea

Divide the congregation into two groups. Ask the first group to take out their keys, or some coins from their pocket (have some spare ones available). When they hear any words in the passage that talk about someone being rich, ask them to jangle the keys or coins.

Ask the second group to hold out their empty hands if they hear something about someone being poor.

At the end of the reading, remind everyone that God loves us all, whether we have a lot or a little.

### What could we learn from the passage?

A brief exploration of the theme in the context of the Bible passage. On Education Sunday, this passage helps us to remember that everyone deserves the chance to learn, and that our schools, colleges and universities should be places where we can all flourish, regardless of whether we are rich or poor. James points out that we can't judge people by what they have: God expects us to love our neighbours regardless of their wealth or their background.

It is not just our thoughts or words that make a difference, but God looks at the things we do to make a difference.

What can we do to make a difference in our community? How can we help our schools, colleges and universities to support students who are in need, and make sure everyone has access to education?

Are there ways in which we can offer support to people in parts of the world where access to education is much more difficult?

### Explore... Education Sunday

Choose from these activities to help people explore the theme. Use the Spiritual styles indicated by the coloured letters (see Spiritual styles key on the inside cover) to help you plan and cater for the different ways in which people connect with God.

#### What's it worth?

ES

**You will need:** to prepare photos on PowerPoint or bring items. Examples: picture of sunflowers by Van Gogh; picture of flowers by very young child; Buckingham Palace and shanty town dwelling; diamond tiara and cheap badge; superstar celebrity and homeless person.

Discuss what makes something valuable. Is it how much it costs/monetary value? Is it how much it is valued by someone (e.g. child's picture given to you by grandchild; badge is memento of special occasion or achievement; simple dwelling is all a family has for a home). How much are we worth to God? Are different people worth different amounts?

### Colourful prayers

WE

**You will need:** bags of Jelly Babies/Smarties/M&Ms (be aware of food allergies and dietary requirements).

Ask people to move into small groups and give each group a bag of sweets. Allocate different sweet colours to different people in education. You may want to project this on a slide or print it in your order of service or on separate piece of paper. For example:

**RED** – teachers/lecturers

**GREEN** – teaching assistants/technicians

**PURPLE/PINK** – heads/principals

**YELLOW** – local government education department staff (LEA)

**ORANGE** – national government education department (DfE)

**BLACK/BROWN** – pupils and students

**BLUE/OTHER** – all those currently excluded from education

Invite the group to share the sweets and to pray for everyone involved in education based on the sweet colours they chose.

### Blessing backpacks

W

**You will need:** paper luggage tags and felt tips, optional: laminator to make the tags more durable.

Prior to this session, invite the children or students to bring in their backpacks. You might extend this to adults working in education, bringing in their briefcases or laptop bags.

Offer paper luggage tags to be decorated with encouraging messages, including: You are loved. God goes with you. God's child. Be strong and courageous, etc.



Attach the tags to the backpacks/workbags and use the bags as a symbol to bless and commission each person into their new year in school/workplace with the tag, as a reminder that God goes with them and will use them to make a difference in their schools.

Anyone who has forgotten to bring their backpack for blessing can take the label home and attach it later.

Lord, bless these bags and those who carry them as they start a new year in education.

Give them joy in each new day, good friendships, focus and the ability to learn, peace when they are worried, and courage to live and love like Christ, knowing you are with them.

Fill them again with your Holy Spirit, today and every day. **Amen.**

See **Role collage** activity at [rootsforchurches.com/educationsunday](https://rootsforchurches.com/educationsunday)

### Thank-you cards

WA

**You will need:** ready-folded cards, pens and a range of stickers, pictures, etc., with which to decorate them.

Make Education Sunday thank-you cards for local schools, thanking the staff for all they do to care for and educate children and young people.

Arrange to deliver the cards during the week, perhaps accompanied by some chocolates or cakes, as a sign of your church's gratitude for education in your community.

### Education around the world

WEA

Watch this video from Unicef about education in different parts of the world. [https://youtu.be/\\_F8nNLZIZrQ?si=dYRM7vbL4mHtI4y?](https://youtu.be/_F8nNLZIZrQ?si=dYRM7vbL4mHtI4y?)



Discuss and pray together:

Prayers of concern for those who don't have ready access to education. Prayers of gratitude for all that we have.

Consider whether your church could use Education Sunday as an opportunity to support a charity that provides education for children in need. You might research a project run by an aid agency with which your church is perhaps already familiar.

### Somewhere to finish

Before the end, come together to gather your thoughts and, if appropriate, to pray.

### Go with God activity

WEA

Give each person a card with a picture (or just the name) of a school/college/university in your area. If there are several, ask them to choose one. Invite them to write the name of anyone they know who has a connection to that place of learning, or to draw a picture to remind them of the person they know. Ask them to take the card home, and to pray for the people they have named.

### Follow-up ideas

- Invite a head teacher or college leader to share their experience working in a local school or college. This might be a live interview, a video recording or a blog post.
- Some families in your community may not have the finances for school uniform or backpacks this year. Consider how your church could distribute new or second-hand school uniform, or contribute towards school trips, sports teams or breakfast clubs.
- Set up a prayer group to pray on a regular basis for the educational institutions in your community. You can find help with this here: <https://www.prayforschools.org/>

Loving God, we ask for your blessing on our community and our schools/college/university. As we go through the week, help us to remember to pray for all those who work and learn in these places. **Amen.**

Find more online at [rootsforchurches.com/educationsunday](https://rootsforchurches.com/educationsunday)