

# difference.

## for Youth Groups

*Difference* is a free seven-session course that equips young people with the formational habits to cross divides, navigate disagreement, practise forgiveness and pursue a just and flourishing world.



## Vision

We live in a world that is complex and divided – from global conflict to our own relationships. That’s why Archbishop Justin Welby has brought together leading thinkers and peacemakers to create *Difference* for Youth Groups.

Young people need the opportunity and support to build good relationships with themselves, their peers, and the world around them. Over a series of sessions, young people will explore the important life skills of learning how to listen to each other, disagree well and work together creatively to find solutions. This will help them to become more confident and better equipped to navigate the complexities of life.

Young people participating in this programme will gain the tools and skills necessary to engage constructively and respectfully with others to build communities where all can flourish.

*Difference* for Youth Groups has been produced in collaboration with youth work and education experts. In 2023, several church youth groups piloted the course materials, and their feedback helped to shape the content of the course.

# Three habits to transform everyday relationships

*Difference* equips young people with three formational habits that can transform everyday relationships. These habits are rooted in the Gospels and the wisdom of expert peacemakers.

Our habits matter. 45% of our daily actions are habitual<sup>1</sup> and neuroscientists have estimated that up to 95% of our behaviours are controlled (at least in part) by the subconscious mind.<sup>2</sup>

There is a close relationship between what we believe and what we do. If we can shape our habits, we can build practices that have a deep and lasting impact on our actions, our thoughts and our character.



## **Be Curious** *Wonder Why*

**Listen to others' stories and see the world through their eyes.**

We read in Genesis 1 that every person is made in the image of God, with value and a unique story. When we are curious enough to seek out that story, we affirm that person's innate value. Demonstrating a true interest in who the person is and how they have experienced the world shows them that they have been heard and honoured. This can make it possible to begin to tread tricky territory together.



## **Be Present** *Be Real*

**Encounter others with authenticity and confidence.**

Our encounters with others are inseparable from our relationship with Jesus (Matthew 25:31-46). Being present in encounters means showing up and sticking around – making time for the other, dedicating our attention to them and encountering them as they are. The Christian faith teaches that God became human and chose to be part of a hurting world. God's response to injustice and hurt is to step into the context in a totally new way, teaching us what it means to be present.



## **Reimagine** *Hope Together*

**Finding hope and opportunity in places where we long to see change.**

The way we see the world is shaped by our imaginations. It is easy to become discouraged when conflict and division seem unending. But we believe that God makes all things new (Revelation 21). The habit of reimagining encourages us to be renewed by the Holy Spirit, stretching our understanding of what is possible. It is rarely a solo experience and often done in community. For relationships to be restored, the systems and structures which we are familiar with need to shift in new and reimagined ways.

<sup>1</sup> David T. Neal, Wendy Wood, and Jeffrey M. Quinn, 'Habits – A Repeat Performance', Duke University, 2006

<sup>2</sup> e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1999, in Martin 2008

# The course

## Sessions

The sessions are designed for both large and small youth groups and can be tailored to different contexts. *Difference* for Youth Groups has seven sessions:

### Session 0 Introduction

**In a divided and complex world, it can be hard to relate to each other well but in the life of Jesus we see three reconciling habits which can help us respond well.**

Conflict is part of home, community and school life, and it can be hard to navigate. We might fear to say the wrong thing or not know how to handle difference. This session introduces you to the three formational habits central to *Difference* - Be Curious, Be Present and Reimagine.

#### This session includes:

- Reflecting on where we see division and broken relationships in the world today
- Introducing three reconciling habits that helps us build good relationships with others and respond to difficult situations
- Building a healthy group culture

### Session 1 The Big Picture

**God invites us to be peacemakers – becoming part of God’s reconciling story in the world.**

The call to be a peacemaker isn’t about ‘keeping the peace’ and avoiding conflict, but about getting involved in a messy, conflicted world – joining in with what God is doing. This session explores God’s invitation to us to be peacemakers in the world.

#### This session includes:

- Watching a film on the theme of becoming a peacemaker
- Exploring God’s invitation to be peacemakers in a divided world
- Being curious about how we can be part of God’s story of peace and reconciliation

## Session 2

# Crossing Divides

Sometimes our own assumptions or prejudice divide us from one another – Jesus shows us how we can cross these divides.

It is easy to distrust and feel wary of those who are different from us. We can find ourselves in echo chambers, drawn to people who agree with us and avoiding those who are different. This can create dividing walls between us.

### This session includes:

- Watching a film on the theme of crossing divides
- Discovering the assumptions or prejudices we have about others
- Exploring how we can engage better with people who are different from us
- Practising being curious by asking questions and taking an interest in others

## Session 3

# Navigating Disagreement

Jesus shows us that it is possible to have good relationships even when we disagree. Instead of being afraid of conflict, we can learn to navigate it honestly and with empathy.

Each of us has a voice worth listening to, even if we disagree with each other. We all want to be heard, respected and not judged. Doing this for people we disagree with helps us to strengthen our relationship with them.

### This session includes:

- Watching a film on the theme of navigating disagreement
- Exploring how to disagree well in a culture where this is hard to do
- Discovering how to listen well and find our own voice
- Practising being present by developing empathy for those we disagree with and building confidence to share our own perspective

## Session 4

# Pursuing Justice

The Bible shows us that justice is an important part of peacemaking. We're invited to recognise the existence of injustice, and to join with others to pursue a just and flourishing world.

Justice is an important part of building a world where everyone can flourish. While we might not always cause injustice, we have the power to respond in ways that reinforce or challenge those injustices.

### This session includes:

- Watching a film on the theme of pursuing justice
- Recognising the existence of injustice
- Exploring how to respond to situations of injustice
- Practising reimagining by discovering the power of coming together to pursue a just and flourishing world

## Session 5

# Practising Forgiveness

God invites us to discover the power of forgiveness, which is both complex and transformational. It involves recognising a hurt and seeing if a better relationship is possible in the future.

God is compassionate and forgives us – we are invited to respond by forgiving others. Forgiveness is not the easy option, but an important part of everyday relationships. It can help us to address the hurt from the past, enabling us to move towards the future we want for the relationship.

### This session includes:

- Watching a film on the theme of forgiveness
- Exploring forgiveness – what it is and what it is not
- Recognising the complexity of forgiveness and the importance of acknowledging a hurt
- Practising reimagining by seeing how our relationships can be transformed by forgiveness

## Session 6

# Belonging Together

God has made us interconnected – we need one another in order to flourish.

We are each unique, with a contribution to offer that only we can make. When we experience differences, disagreements or divides in friendships, it can feel like hard work. Both other people are actually a gift – we and the world would be poorer without them.

### This session includes:

- Watching a film on the theme of belonging together
- Recognising the value of each one of us and the unique contribution we have to make
- Exploring how we're connected to each other
- Practising reimagining by celebrating the ways our uniqueness and differences can enrich one another

# Session info and structure

The course enables young people to develop three reconciling habits through its session structure. Various options are available according to how long you have for each session.



## Session info

### Story

Exploring the session theme by engaging with young people's perspectives and the Bible

### Space

Putting the habits into practice through an activity

### Sanctuary

Reflecting on the session learning and application through a creative activity

## Sessions include:



Films – stories from young people about the topic



Bible – stories and verses on the session theme



Interactive exercises



Reflection time



Space for discussion



# Running the course

Running the course is simple and transformative, for both hosts and participants.

Course facilitators are called hosts. Hosts need to complete the *Difference* for Youth Groups training to access the materials on our website. The training gives hosts everything they need to prepare and run each session confidently, including all the materials for the course, key skills and top tips.



Register for training by scanning the QR code or visit:

[difference.rln.global/  
difference-training](https://difference.rln.global/difference-training)

# Stay connected

We invite all hosts running *Difference* for Youth Groups to sign up to our mailing list to receive inspiration for being curious, being present and reimagining in your everyday life, as well as the latest news about what we're up to and how you can get involved.

**Connect with us by scanning the QR code or visit:**

**[difference.rln.global/youth-sign-up](https://difference.rln.global/youth-sign-up)**



**Scan here!**

# About us

***Difference* has been created by the Reconciling Leaders Network (RLN), a registered charity, part of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Reconciliation Ministry. RLN works to mobilise a generation to live out their calling as peacemakers and reconcilers, for a just and flourishing society.**

Reconciliation is one of Archbishop Justin Welby's priorities, with a vision for the church to be a reconciling presence in the midst of conflict.

The Archbishop's Reconciliation Ministry aims to strengthen the ministry of reconciliation within the global Church – for reconciliation to be the great gift the Church offers the world. The goal is to build a network of reconciling leaders growing out of and sustained by their local churches. That means people from all walks of life, across all sectors and spheres of society bearing the hallmarks of a reconciler, showing God's reconciling love through Jesus.

# difference.

## Stay in touch

 [difference.rln](https://www.instagram.com/difference.rln)

 [difference.rln](https://www.facebook.com/difference.rln)

 [@DifferenceRLN](https://twitter.com/DifferenceRLN)

## Contact us

 [hello@rln.global](mailto:hello@rln.global)

 [difference.rln.global](https://www.difference.rln.global)