

difference.

for Secondary Schools

Difference is a free six-session course that equips young people with the formational habits to cross divides, navigate disagreement, pursue justice and encounter others well.



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 Secondary Schools.

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 listening to each other, disagreeing well and working together creatively to find solutions. This will help them to become more confident and better equipped to navigate the complexities of life.

Students participating in this programme will gain the tools and skills necessary to engage constructively and respectfully to build welcoming school communities.

Difference for Secondary Schools has been developed with the Church of England Education Office. Its vision for education is deeply Christian, with Jesus’ promise of ‘life in all its fullness’ at its heart. In 2023, several schools and their students 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 life of Jesus and the wisdom of expert peacemakers.

Our habits matter. 45% of our daily actions are habitual¹ and neuroscientists have estimated that up to 95% of our behaviours are controlled (at least in part) by the subconscious mind.²

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 deep 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 trickier 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.



Be Present *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 with which we are familiar with may need to shift.

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

² e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1999, in Martin 2008

The course

Sessions

The sessions are designed for both large and small student groups and can be tailored to different contexts. *Difference* for Secondary Schools has six sessions:

Session 1 Introduction

In complex and divided times, we can build habits that enable us to relate better to others and pursue a just and flourishing world for all.

Conflict is part of friendships, 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. These help us respond well to situations and build relationship with people, even when this feels difficult.

This session includes:

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

Session 2 Crossing Divides

Sometimes our own assumptions or prejudices divide us from others – we can challenge these assumptions by being curious about the story we don't know.

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, and challenging, the assumptions we make about other people
- Practising being curious by asking questions and reflecting on our own reactions

Session 3

Navigating Disagreement

It is possible to have good relationships even when we disagree. Instead of being afraid of disagreement, we can learn to navigate it with honesty 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

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 about 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

Forgiveness is both complex and transformational. It involves recognising a hurt and seeing if a better relationship is possible in the future.

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 recognising a hurt
- Practising reimagining by seeing how our relationships can be transformed by forgiveness

Session 6

Belonging Together

We need each other in order to flourish. Every person has innate value and a unique contribution to make.

We are all different, unique and of deep value. We flourish when we value our interconnectedness alongside the unique worth that each of us has. This session draws on the learning of Ubuntu.

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 students to develop three reconciling habits through its session structure. Each session is designed to last 55 minutes.

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 students.

Course facilitators are called hosts. Hosts need to complete the *Difference for Secondary Schools* 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 Secondary Schools* 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)

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 a 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](#)

 [difference.rln](#)

 [@DifferenceRLN](#)

Contact us

 hello@rln.global

 difference.rln.global