

Unlocking God-given potential

Activities for children
and young people



Through our resources, the children and young people in your congregation can play a vital role in learning about and praying for people living in extreme poverty and injustice in an age-appropriate way.

Below you'll find a plan for two 50-minute sessions. The first one is aimed at 4 to 7-year-olds and the second one is aimed at 7 to 11-year-olds. There are also some extra suggestions for tailoring the content for your young people, aged 11 to 16. If you're planning an all-age service, some of the activities can easily be set up in the main service, with the children sharing their prayers at the end of the service. Feel free to use the sessions in their entirety or swap them around to fit your usual plan.

Did you know?

Did you know Tearfund has a youth website aimed at 17 to 23-year-olds that explores issues of extreme poverty and injustice. To find out more, visit wearetearfund.org

Activities for children aged 4-7

Intro game (10 mins)

You will need:

- Tuff tray or wide plastic container
 - Bag of sand
 - Playmobil figures or characters of your choice to represent a family
 - Pack of seeds to plant in the sand
1. Print out the provided pictures (pages 8-14) onto paper (pineapple, house, pair of trousers, books, medicine, church building, school building), and stick them onto cardboard and cut them out.
 2. Hide the pictures around the room before the children arrive.
 3. Place a tuff tray in the middle of the room and invite the children to sit down around it. Explain that today they're going to hear a story about a family who live in a small village in a country called Ivory Coast, which is in West Africa.

4. Ask the group if anyone has been on a plane before and to guess how many hours it might take to fly to Ivory Coast from the UK.

Answer: About ten hours.

While the children are watching, pour the sand into the tuff tray and ask them to help you spread it out. Explain that today we're going to imagine that this tray is our village. In this village live a family called Rene and Odile and their six children. Choose children in the group to place the figures into the sand.

If you don't have access to the items recommended above, you could use a photo of a beach or a desert and the children could draw characters to be placed alongside.

Story time and prayer (15 mins)

Now, the family doesn't have much money. They are farmers and they work hard to grow vegetables, but because they don't have much money, the children are often hungry, they can't go to school and if they get sick, they can't buy medicine.

But do you know, one day they learnt in their church that actually God has given them everything they need to be able to look after their family.

And it's like the story of the tiny mustard seed in the Bible.

One day, Jesus was talking to a large crowd of people and he said:

'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.'

Matthew 13:31-32

Hold one of the seeds in your hand and explain that it's like this tiny seed in my hand. This tiny seed, just like the mustard seed, is so small, and yet when it grows, it'll be a large plant.

Jesus is telling us that although sometimes we can feel so small, and that we have nothing to give, with a small bit of faith, patience and perseverance, God can help us to build something incredible.

And that is what Rene and Odile learnt.

- They learnt that prayer is really powerful and that God answers prayer.
- They learnt that they could slowly save money and over time build themselves a house.
- They learnt new farming techniques and now they grow pineapples.
- They learnt that it's really important to be kind and caring to their neighbours.

Now, hidden around the room are cardboard pictures. Can you find a picture and bring it over to the tray?

What do you have?

- Pineapple
- House
- Pair of trousers
- Books
- Medicine
- Church
- School

Invite the children to plant a tiny seed into the sand and then stick their cardboard picture into the sand, over the place where the seed is.

Explain how just as Rene and Odile used the small seeds they had to grow gifts for their family and community, we each have talents and potential that we can give to God and ask him to grow good gifts.

Ask the group: Before, this family had nothing and were really struggling. But now, how do you think they're feeling? Talk about how they now have clothes, medicine, food and can go to school.

Explain that today we're learning about a charity called Tearfund. They helped Rene and Odile receive the training that turned their lives around.

Pray

Shall we give thanks to God for his faithfulness in helping people in other parts of the world?

Invite the group to pick up the cardboard picture that they put into the sand and take it in turns to go around the circle and thank God for it.

True or false game (10 mins)

When Rene and Odile became pineapple farmers, they probably had to learn lots of new things about how to grow pineapples.

Invite the group to stand up then explain that you're going to play a game to see who could be a pineapple farmer.

Explain that the right side of the room is 'True' and the left side of the room is 'False'.

Explain that you're going to tell them a fact and they need to decide if it's correct or not – 'true or false'. If they think the answer is 'true' then they should move to the right side of the room. But if they think the answer is 'false' they should move to the left side of the room.

Q: Pineapples grow in tall trees.

A: False. They grow on the ground.

Q: Some pineapples can be red and blue.

A: False. They are golden and green.

Q: Pineapples ripen faster upside down.

A: True.

Q: A pineapple is a berry.

A: True.

Q: The world's largest pineapple weighed more than a baby.

A: True.



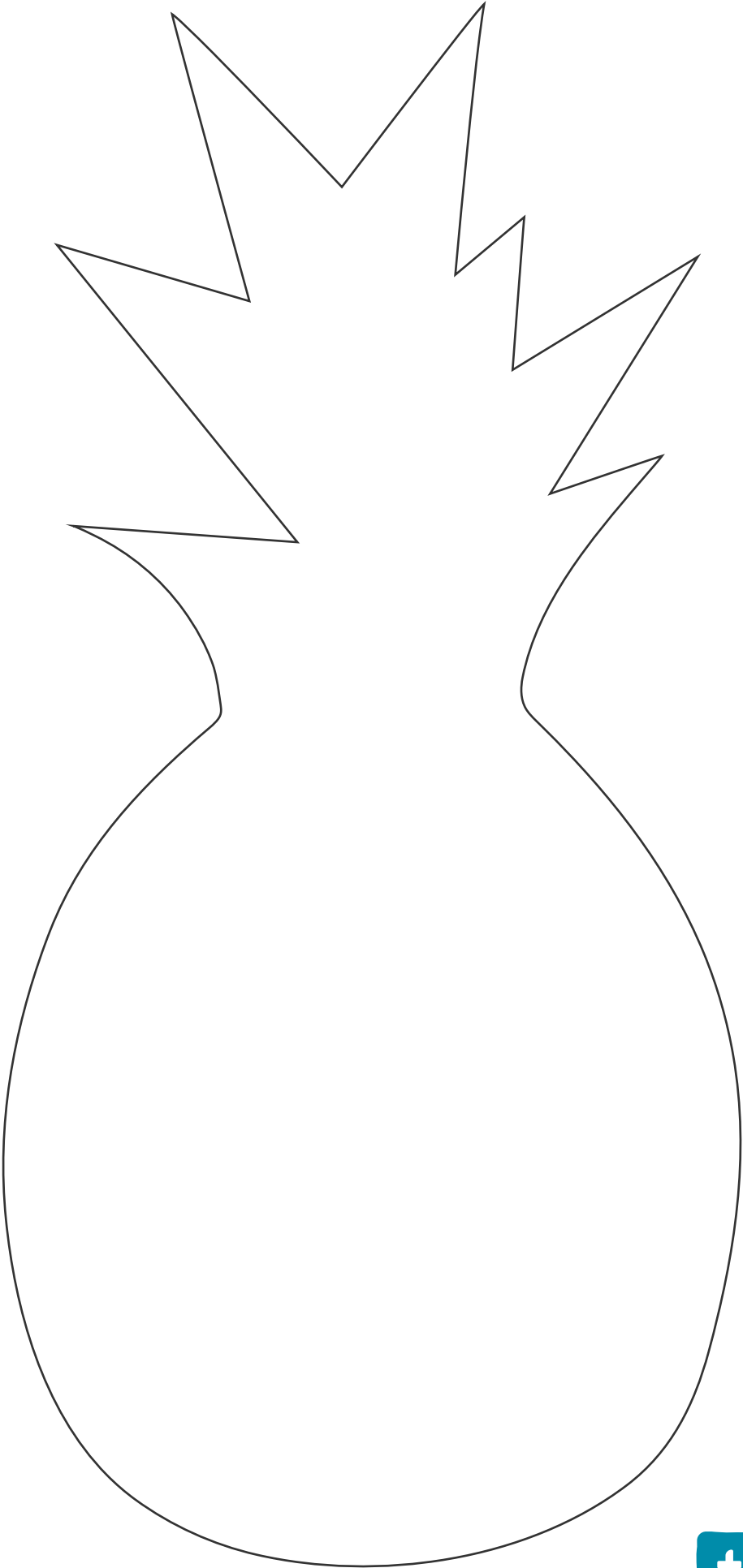
Pineapple art (15 mins)

Start by asking the group to think about the gifts God has given them. What makes each of them unique? It could be kindness or being a great baker, or maybe they're a really fast runner.

(You may find the younger ones in your group are happier just decorating their picture, while you chat with the older ones).

- Ask them to share their thoughts and then ask them to think about how they could use this to help others.
- Hand out the printed pineapple outline (on page 4) and invite them to write their gifts into the middle of their pineapple.
- They can then use pens, crayons, stickers and coloured paper to decorate their pineapples.

Pineapple art



Activities for children aged 7-11

Intro game (15 mins)

You will need:

- Twister game.
- Or use washable chalk to draw circles onto the floor like Twister.

To set up the game:

1. Print out the provided pictures (pages 8-14) onto paper (pineapple, house, pair of trousers, books, medicine, church building, school building).
2. Stick the pictures onto the different coloured circles on the Twister game.

(This is a game for four players. The group can take it in turns, and the ones who aren't playing can watch how tricky it is.)

3. Invite the group to play Twister – with a twist.
4. Explain that the Twister board represents a village and in order to be able to go to school, eat food, wear clothes, have medicine if you're sick, then you need to be able to reach every picture with a part of your body.
5. Play the game.

Ask the group how they found it.

Were they able to get everything they needed to live?

Was there anything they didn't have?

Story time and prayer (15 mins)

Explain that today they're going to be learning about a family who live in a small village in a country called Ivory Coast, which is in West Africa.

Ask the group if anyone has been on a plane before and to guess how many hours it might take to fly to Ivory Coast from the UK.

Answer: About ten hours.

Story: In this village live a family called Rene and Odile and their children.

Now, this family doesn't have much money. They are farmers and they work hard to grow vegetables, but because they don't have much money, the children are often hungry, they can't go to school and if they get sick, they can't buy medicine.

Remember the Twister game. You were trying to reach everything, but it was impossible.

But do you know, one day, Rene and Odile learnt in their church that actually God has given them everything they need to be able to look after their family. They started to focus once again on God, take part in training and work together as a community.

And it's like the story of the tiny mustard seed in the Bible.

One day, Jesus was talking to a large crowd of people and he said:

'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.'

Matthew 13:31-32

Jesus is telling us that although sometimes we can feel so small, and that we have nothing to give, with a small bit of faith, patience and perseverance, God can help us to build something incredible.

Invite the group to stand on a spot and hold hands. Explain that when we work together and look at what we already have, we find that God has given us all we need as a community.

And that is what Rene and Odile learnt.

- They learnt that prayer is really powerful and that God answers prayer.
- They learnt that they could slowly save money and over time build themselves a house.
- They learnt new farming techniques and now they grow pineapples.
- They learnt that it's really important to be kind and caring to their neighbours.

Ask the group: Before, this family had nothing and were really struggling. But now, how do you think they're feeling?

Explain that today we're learning about a charity called Tearfund. They helped Rene and Odile receive the training that turned their lives around.

Pray

Shall we give thanks to God for his faithfulness in helping people in other parts of the world?

Build your village game (15 mins)

You will need:

- Print-outs of the village map (page 7).
- A selection of rubber stamps – these can be shapes, colours, images, use whatever you have.
- Two pairs of trousers, two pineapples, two pictures of a house, a selection of books, pictures of/ or medicine bottles, two pictures of a church building, two pictures of a school building.

To play the game:

1. Choose one adult to look after the stamps and to sit at one end of the room.
2. Place the pile of items that the teams have to collect at another distant point in the room.

3. Divide the group into two teams.
4. Give each team a village map.
5. Explain that they are going to play a relay game and need to build their village.
6. The first member of each team takes the village map, runs to the pile of items and chooses what they need. They then run to the adult with the stamps and get their map stamped to show that they have got that item for their village. They then run back to their team and hand the map over to the next player.

The winning team is the first team to build their village.

Using our gifts (5 mins)

Discuss: Invite the group to think about the items they had to collect. Is there anything they could live without? How would they manage if they didn't have any of those things in their village?

Did you know: One in ten people around the world still live without any of these essential items – we call that living in extreme poverty.

Tearfund works to help train people like Rene and Odile so that they have everything they need to provide for their family.

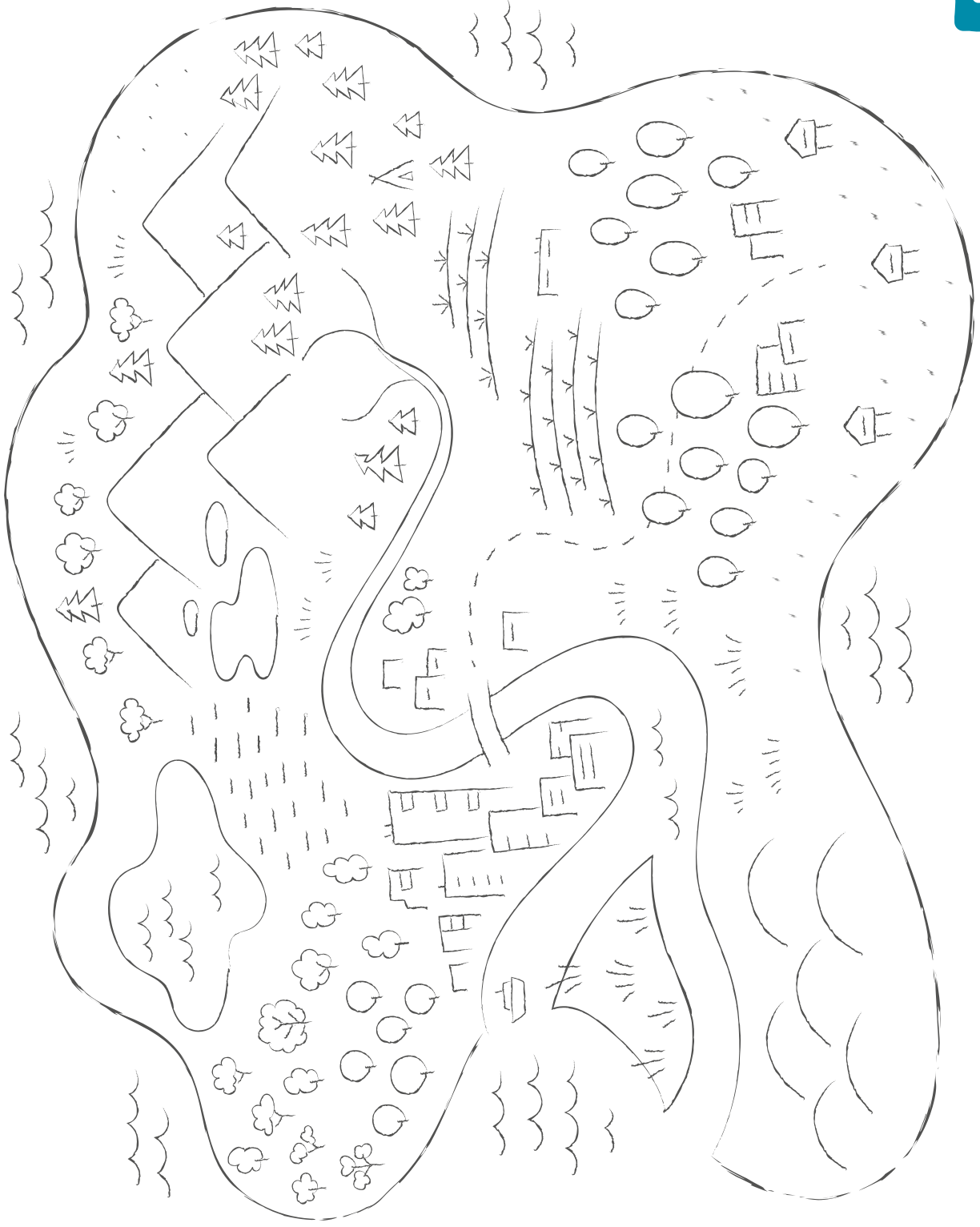
Think about: What could we do as a group to raise some money so that through our donations more families like Rene and Odile's can receive the training they need to unlock their God-given potential?



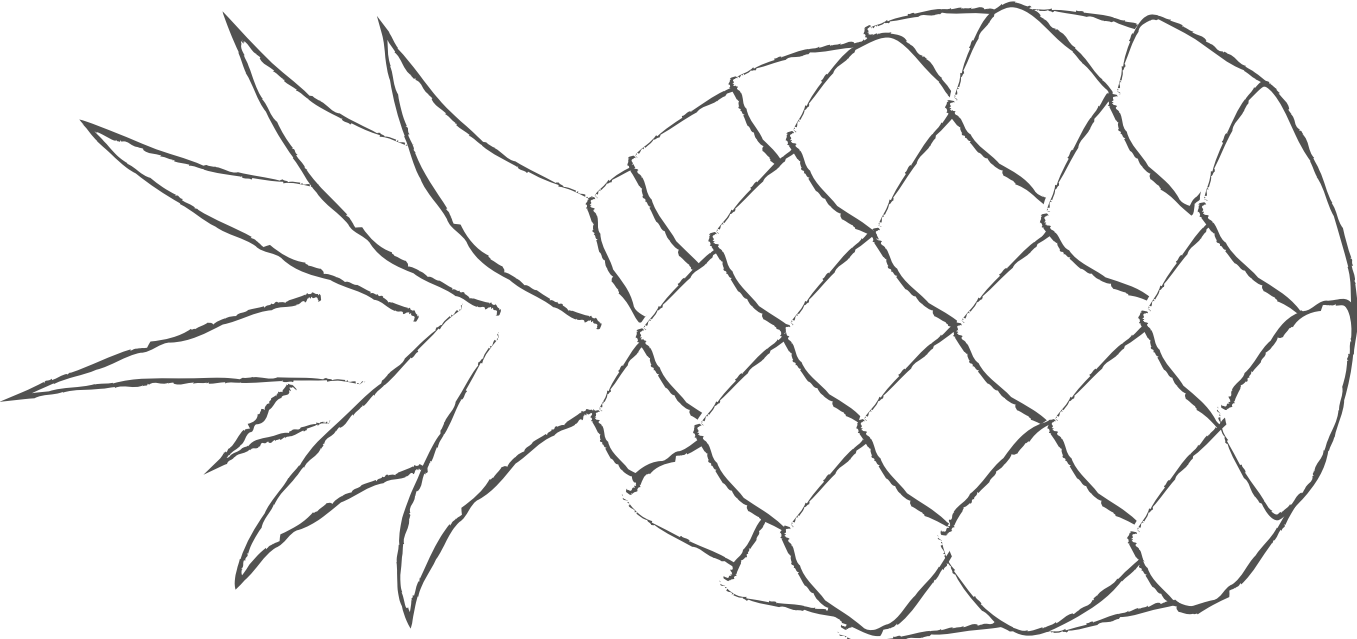
📍 Community members Marc and Eudoxie have taken part in Church and Community Transformation training at their local church in central Ivory Coast.

Village map

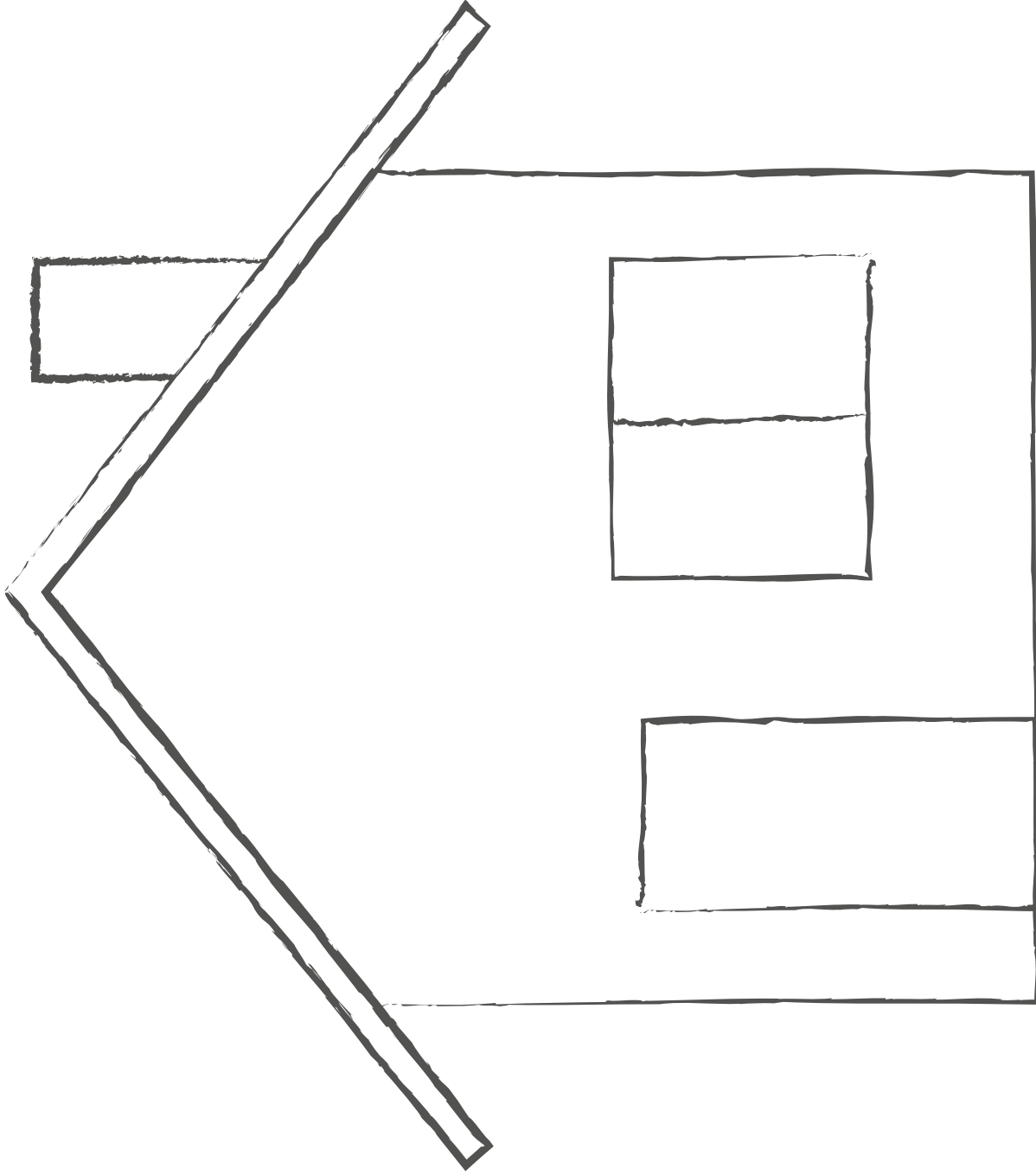
Collect the items listed and get your map stamped



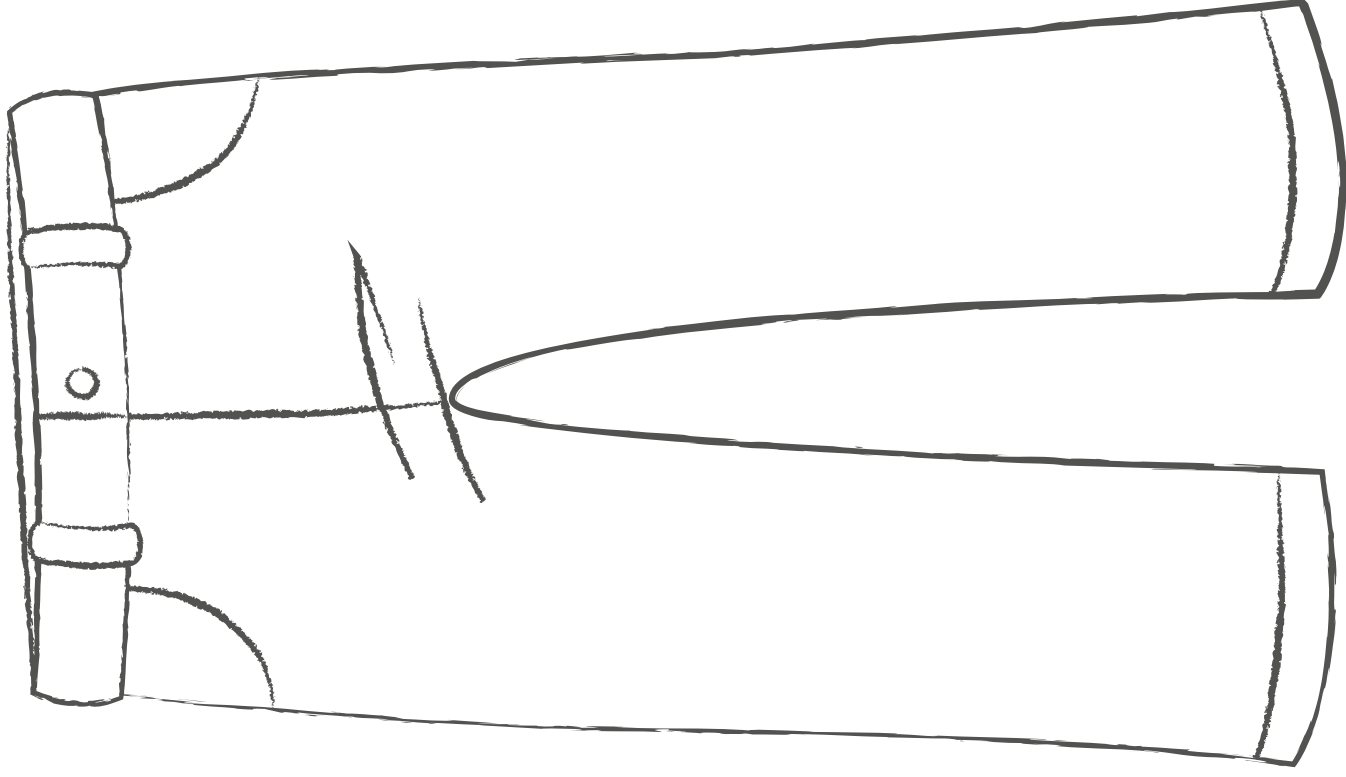
Pineapple



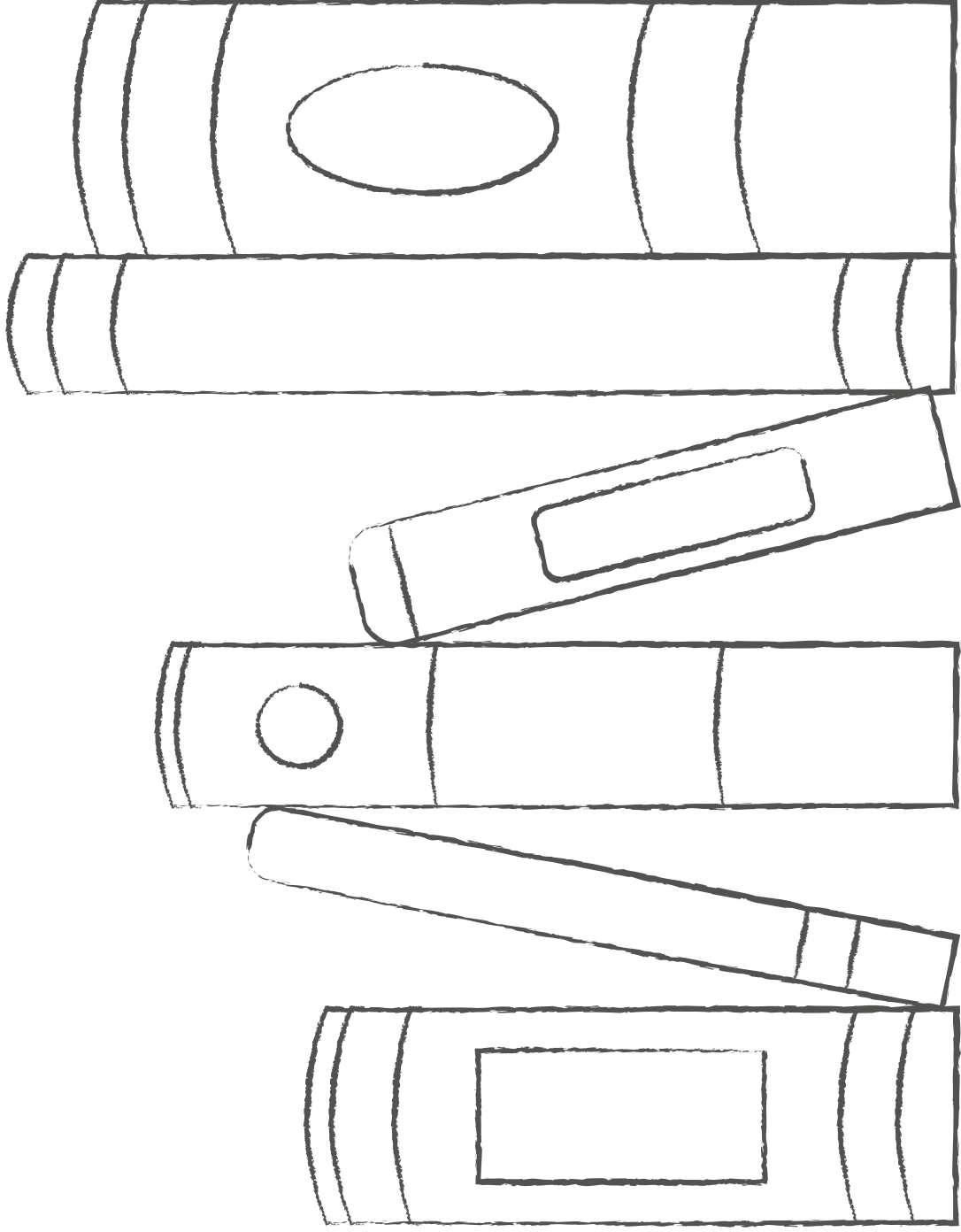
House



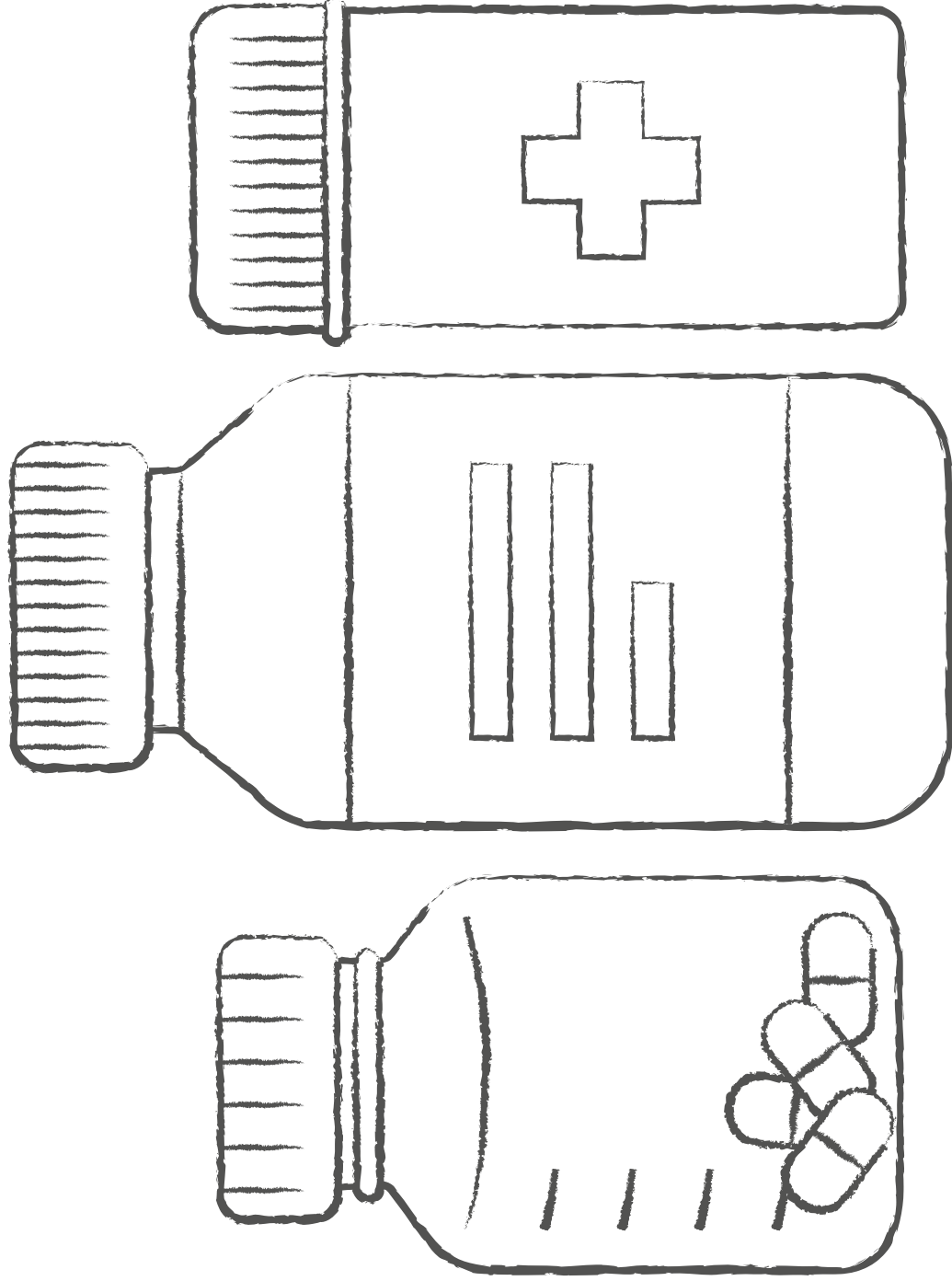
Trousers



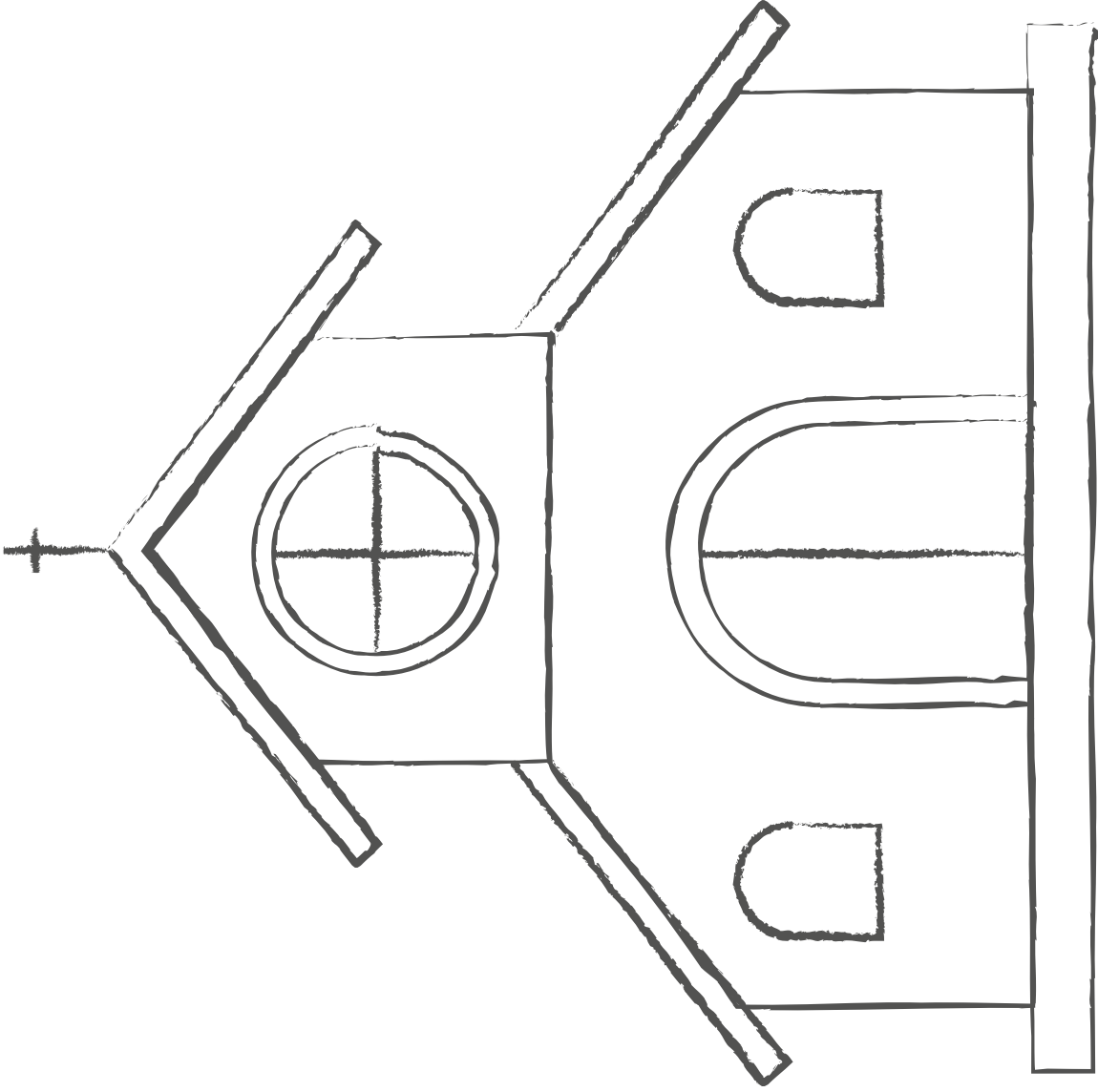
Books



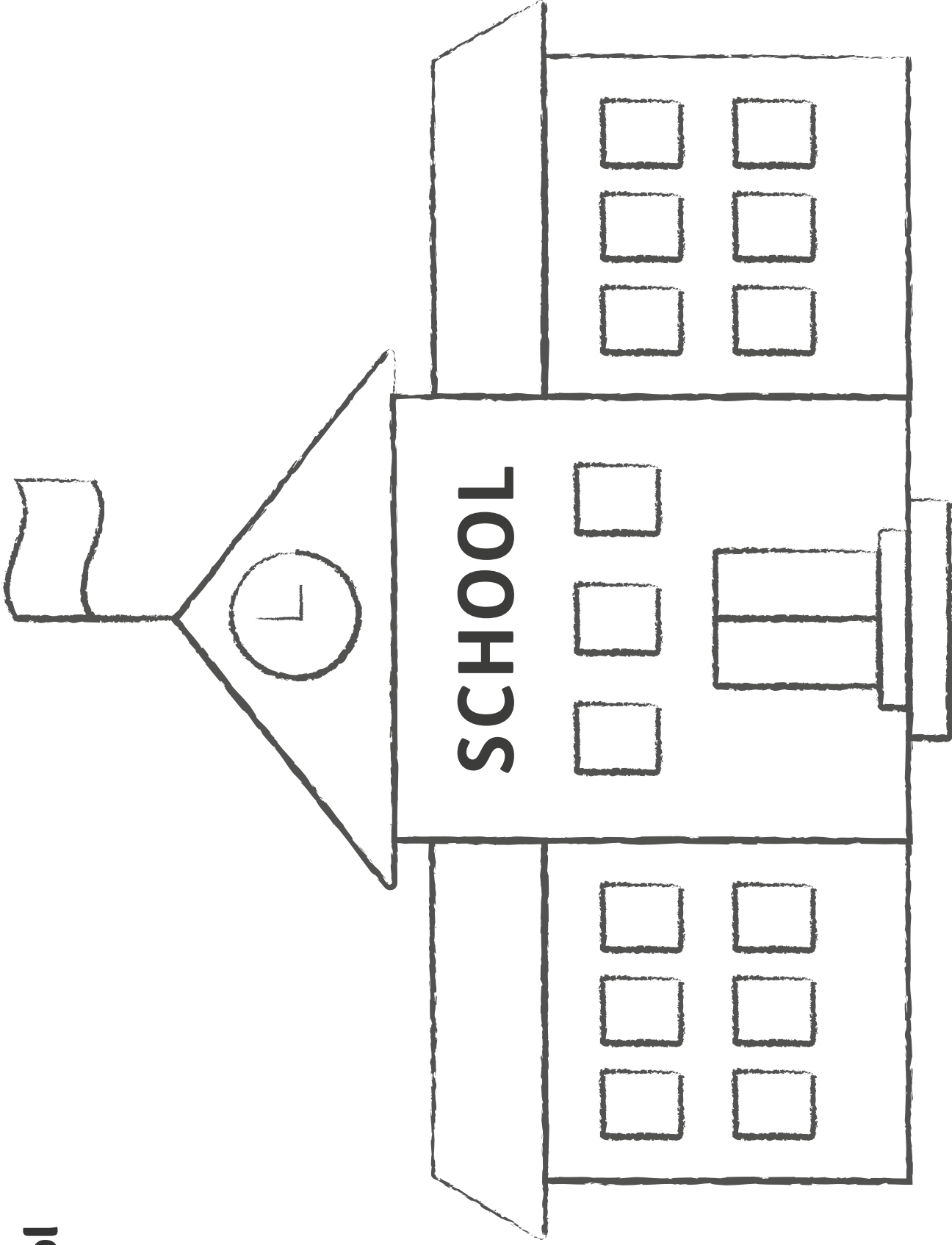
Medicine



Church



School



How to tailor these activities for young people, aged 11-16

To plan a session for your young people, we recommend choosing a couple of the activities within the children's resources and combining it with aspects of the talk that will be taking place during the main service.

Here's an outline suggestion, but feel free to tailor it to suit your group:

Introduce the idea that the church in the UK is being called irrelevant, dying, obscure.

Do they know what these words mean? What do they think about them?

Then explain how in a report published in 2022 by the Church of England, the cost of living crisis has led to nearly 3 million people seeking help from churches and faith groups. In a further campaign, published in 2022 and supported by the Church of Scotland and the Church of Wales calling on the UK Government to increase the cost of living support for the most vulnerable families, specific mention was made that churches are on the frontline of offering essential, lifeline support.

What does this tell us?

From food banks, to homeless shelters and warm spaces – we are seeing that the church has a clear role to play in supporting the community.

Think about your church – how does it support the wider community?

Explain that today we're learning about a charity called Tearfund. They work with churches all over the world, helping people in extreme poverty to turn their lives around through life-changing training.



Play the video of Rene and Odile.

Choose to play either the Twister game or the village building game from the resources for 7-11s.

Use the story of the tiny mustard seed in the Bible to talk about how sometimes we can feel so small, and that we have nothing to give, but how with a small bit of faith, patience and perseverance, God can help us to build something incredible.

Discuss what Rene and Odile learnt. How did this change their lives?

Invite a few of the group to read these Bible verses:

John 10:10

Jeremiah 29:11

Psalms 68:32-35

Isaiah 40:31

Discuss what God might be saying to them today through these verses.

Discuss: Did you know one in ten people around the world still live without any of these essential items? We call that living in extreme poverty.

What could we do as a group to raise some money for Tearfund so that through our donations more families like Rene and Odile's can receive the training they need to unlock their God-given potential?

tearfund.org

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