

## THROUGH THE ROOF

### Preparation and delivery

Set up the 'house' in an appropriate spot, where the children can see into it. E.g. you could suspend the roof between the front two pews and get the stretcher-bearers to stand on the pews (carefully supervised) while they break through the roof.

You'll need one person to tell the story and a helper to guide the children through their parts.

At the beginning of the service, the helper should choose two children to carry the stretcher and explain their actions to them: where they are to start, where to walk to, what they will need to do.

Also choose a *robust* child to be Jesus, and pre-warn him/her that the process of breaking through the roof will be noisy.

### Props

A doll/puppet on a stretcher, suspended on strings

A 'house' structure big enough for a child to sit in it, with a paper roof

Do you remember the name of the special baby who was born that first Christmas? Jesus.

What was so special about him? Jesus was a human being, just like you and me. But Jesus is also God himself - come to earth to teach us all about what he's like, and what he wants us to be like.

So, when that special baby grew up, it's not surprising to hear that he did all sorts of amazing things. After all, this was no ordinary man! He *looked* just like anyone else - but this was God himself, born as a human.

People loved to listen to all the things he was teaching them. And when they heard that he had healed lots of ill people, they came from miles around to ask him to make them better, too. The people loved Jesus, and they gathered in great crowds around him.

But the leaders of the people weren't so keen on him. They thought he might try to take their power from them. They didn't agree with the things he was teaching. And they didn't believe that he was really the Son of God.

Today we're going to hear a story about what happened when one very ill man met Jesus.

*[Helper stands, with puppet on stretcher, in middle of church.]*

This is our very ill man. What shall we call him? NAME.

You can see that NAME's so poorly he can't even stand up. In fact, he's completely paralysed. That means that he can't move at all. How can NAME get to Jesus?

He needs some people to carry him on his stretcher. Can we have some volunteers to help him?

*[Helper gives the puppet to the stretcher bearers.]*

Now we need someone to be Jesus, sitting in this house here.

*[Helper takes 'Jesus' to sit in the house.]*

And we need some more volunteers to be the crowds of people filling the house.

*[Helper chooses some volunteers to sit in the aisle, blocking the stretcher bearers' way to the house.]*

*[Helper guides the stretcher bearers to act out what follows as it's read.]*

Now, along comes NAME, carried by his friends on his stretcher, desperate to see Jesus. But the house is so packed with people that there's no room for anyone to move in or out.

How can NAME get to Jesus?

Thankfully, NAME's friends are brave and determined. They *know* that Jesus can heal NAME, if only they can get him there. So what do they do? They notice that the house has a nice flat roof - and up they go!

*[Helper supervises the children on the pew and reminds 'Jesus' what's about to happen!]*

They climb up onto the roof, and they make a hole in it, and they carefully, carefully lower NAME through the hole and down into the room where Jesus is sitting.

When Jesus saw what NAME's friends had done, and what faith they had in him, he said to NAME, "My dear son, God forgives all the bad things you've ever done. You can be friends with him again."

But - oh dear - the leaders of the people didn't like that at all! Who was Jesus to say that God forgave NAME? Only God himself could do that! And remember, they didn't believe that Jesus was God himself.

But Jesus knew what they were thinking. "Is it easier to forgive someone for the bad things he's done, or to make him walk again?" he asked them. And then, to show that he did have the power - that he really was God himself - Jesus said to NAME, "Get up, pick up your stretcher, and go home."

And at once, NAME stood up, and taking the stretcher with him, he walked out of the house. And he went home, saying a prayer of thanks to God.

*[Helper picks up the puppet and makes it 'walk' away.]*

And what do you think all the other people felt when they saw what had happened?

Excited, yes - and a bit scared! They'd never seen anything like this before. They talked to each other - and they went home praising God, just like NAME.

When someone we care about is in trouble, we can ask Jesus for help just like NAME's friends did. And, just as he did for NAME, we can trust him to give even more help than we can imagine!