

The Little Hut

With thanks to <http://www.word4life.com/hut.html>

There is potential, in the final section, for children or other voices to be involved in the 'dialogue' and in the closing prayer.

Thomas was excited and scared all at once. He'd been looking forward to this day for a long time. He could hardly believe it was here at last. Today he was leaving home. Today he was setting sail for a new life, in a new land. Thomas felt sad about the people and places he was leaving behind. But he also felt excited about the new people he'd meet, the new places he'd see and the new things he'd do. If he thought too hard about it, then he felt a bit scared as well. But mostly it made him feel very grown-up and happy. He was off on a big adventure!

The sun shone as Thomas's ship set sail across the sparkling ocean. But, oh dear, after two days at sea the weather suddenly changed. A terrible storm swept over the little sailing ship, and before long it was destroyed by the crashing waves. The sailors managed to get most people into lifeboats, and row them to safety, but Thomas lost his footing and tumbled into the stormy water. He just managed to grab hold of a piece of the floating wreckage in time to stop himself from sinking. And at last, when the storm was over, he found himself washed up on a small island.

Thomas lay exhausted on the sand, praying for God to rescue him. But when he explored the island, he found that he was completely alone. As he gathered together the driftwood from his shipwreck, and began

to build himself a little hut for shelter, he cried out again and again for God to help him.

Every day Thomas scanned the horizon for help. Every day he prayed to be rescued. But then one day, when he went out looking for food, he came home to find his little hut in flames, the smoke rolling up to the sky.

Thomas was stunned with grief and anger, and he shouted at God: “How could you do this to me?” Thomas shouted and shouted at God that day, until at last he wore himself out, and fell into an exhausted sleep on the sand.

Early the next day, he was awakened by the sound of a ship that was approaching the island.

“Ahoy!” shouted one of the sailors. “We’ve come to rescue you!”

Thomas could hardly believe his eyes. “But ... how did you know I was here?” he asked in astonishment. “I’d given up all hope of being rescued.”

“We saw your smoke signal,” said the sailor.

Like Thomas, we all have times when life feels pretty bad. Sometimes, no matter how hard we pray, it feels like things are getting worse, not better. But the Bible tells us that God never leaves us and he always answers our prayers.

Thomas didn’t think his prayers had been heard. He was so busy thinking about the storm and the shipwreck, that he didn’t stop to think about how God had kept him safe through it all. He was so busy thinking about being stranded on the island, that he didn’t stop to

think about how God had brought him safely there, with enough driftwood to build himself a little hut. And then he was so busy thinking about the little hut burning down, that he lost patience with God altogether.

We can all be like that. Things go wrong, and we blame God, and we don't stop to notice where he *is* at work in our lives.

But even when it feels like our little hut is burning to the ground, we can be sure that God has us safe. And then, like Thomas, we sometimes find that God turns a fiery disaster into a kind of smoke signal: the very thing that calls the power of God's saving love and grace into our lives.

As Year 6 and our other leavers prepare to move to new schools in September, I'm sure they won't find themselves stuck on a desert island. I pray that their new adventure will be full of excitement and fabulous times, but if they ... or we ... face times when things don't seem to be going as we had hoped, let's remember that God is always with us, wherever we go. Let's remember to thank him for all his good gifts. And let's remember his promise *always* to answer when we pray.

In the Bible, God makes lots of promises, and we can count on every one of them. Let's still ourselves now, as we remember some of the amazing promises God makes.

When we say, "I don't know what to do."

God says: I will guide you. [Prov. 3.5-6]

When we say, "I can't do it"

God says: I'll give you the strength to do it. [Phil. 4.13]

When we say, "I'm frightened"

God says: Don't be afraid. I'll be with you wherever you go. [Josh. 1.9]

When we say, "I can't go on,"

God says: I'll help you. [Ps. 91.15]

When we say, "I feel all alone"

God says: I will never leave you or forsake you. [Heb. 13:5]

When we say, "I can't forgive myself"

God says: I forgive you. [I John 1.9]

When we say, "I'm not as good as other people."

God says: You're amazing. I made you. [Ps. 139.13-4]

When we say, "Nobody really loves me,"

God says: I love you. I call you by name. [John 3.16]

Let us pray.

Father God,

thank you for all your amazing promises.

Thank you for promising to be with us wherever we go,

and to answer every time we pray.

We ask you, now, to bless each one of us and to keep us safe.

We ask you especially to bless, guide and protect our leavers,

and to help them to remember to trust in you.

We ask these things in the precious name of Jesus.

Amen.