

Welcome to Families on Faith Adventures @ Home!

This resource has been put together for you by the United Reformed Church Children's and Youth Work team and the synod CYDOs and their equivalents.

We hope you will enjoy sharing a time of faith and fellowship together as a family through these stories, games, activities and prayers. They are designed as a 'pick and mix' of ways to experience God's message through the Bible, exploring what it means to you and express that in words and action. They are not linked to the lectionary but can be used in any order as we explore all the different parts of the Bible.

The Walking the Way challenges are one way of continuing our walk with Jesus throughout the week.

These ideas are designed to be intergenerational - maybe even to be shared with members of the family you can't see now except via the internet.

The resources are based on our non-uniformed children's groups, Friends on Faith Adventures and Pilots, but have been modified to make them suitable for all families at home.

*These activities are planned to be used together as a family and under adult supervision. Please be aware of your family's ages and abilities as some activities may need more adult support than others. **Stay safe and have fun!***

This week's Bible story is:

Strong Foundations in Shaky Times
Matthew 7 verses 24-28



With many varieties of activities and things to do to help explore the theme. Look out for this 'hands on' symbol.

Get to know your Bible

The Bible is like a library made up of 66 books written by many different people over many years.

The Old Testament books were written before Jesus was born. They are the holy stories he would have grown up hearing and reading. There are 39 of these.

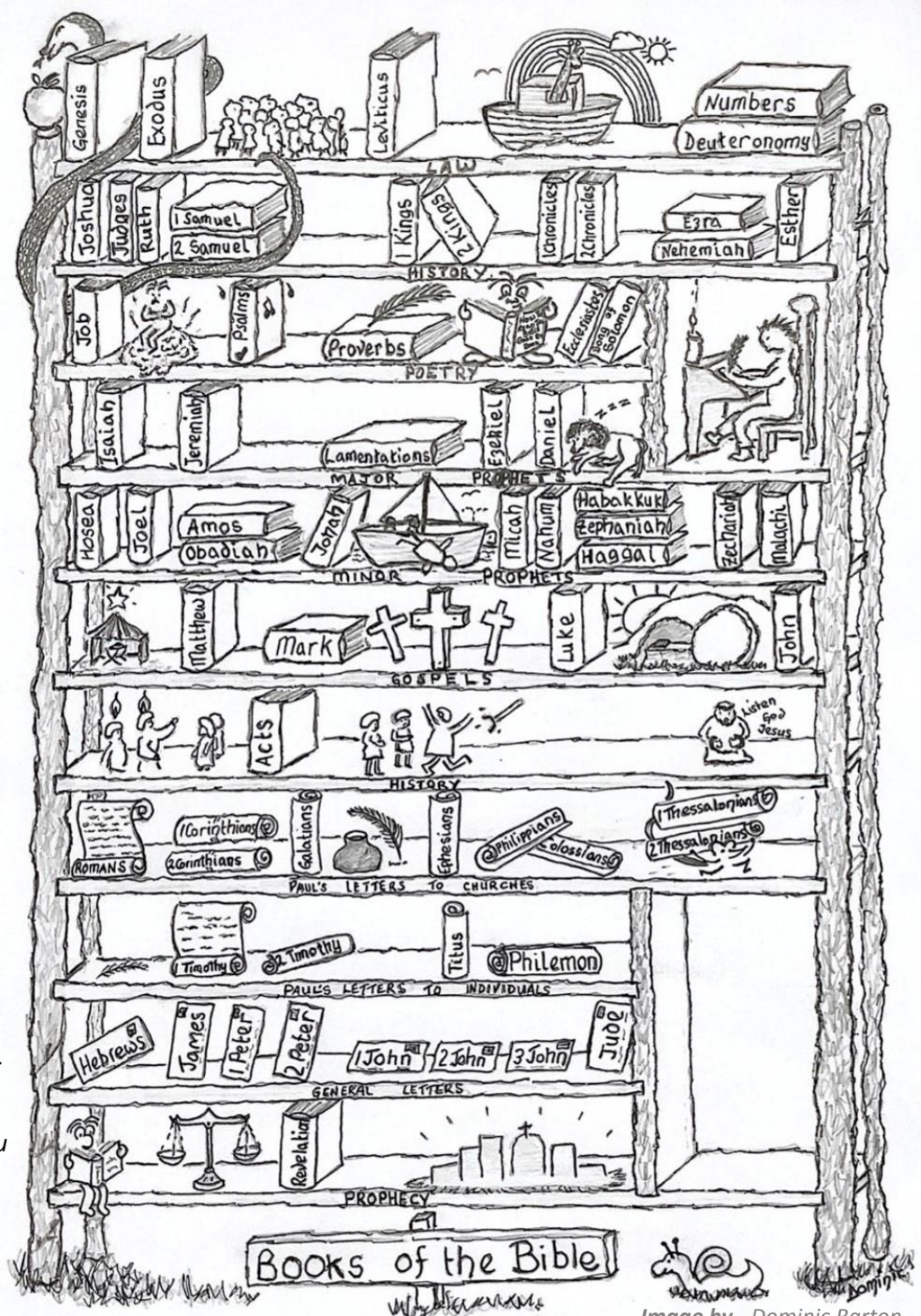
The New Testament tells us the stories of Jesus and his followers. There are 27 books in the New Testament.



Can you find and colour the book on the bookshelf that this week's story is from?

If you have a Bible, see if you can find the story in there.

You could print this out once and colour each new book on the bookshelf as you read stories from it.



Bible context – Matthew

The book of Matthew is the first book in the New Testament. It was written around 60 AD by Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples. Matthew was a tax collector before following Jesus and in his book, he often shows the links between Jesus and the old Testament prophecies. In this passage, Matthew is writing about things Jesus said when teaching people how to live.

The Story – Matthew 7 verses 24-28 (The New International Reader's Version)

Jesus said, "everyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like a wise man. He builds his house on the rock. The rain comes down. The water rises. The winds blow and beat against that house. But it does not fall. It is built on the rock. But everyone who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man. He builds his house on sand. The rain comes down. The water rises. The winds blow and beat against that house. And it falls with a loud crash." Jesus finished saying all these things. The crowds were amazed at his teaching.

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Online versions of the story

Watch and Listen

Cartoon by Saddleback Kids <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6S3cRVLMFQ>
Lego version by Packrat Productions <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjoqMrFXx-k>
Short film Animation by Gospel Pictures <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mt5PBQINfBc>
African Retelling cartoon by RodtheNey https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXWHLB1f6_U
Nicola, from the FOFA@H team, has produced this lovely version of the story for under fives
<https://youtu.be/QwqIUKNJF4w>

Dance and Sing

Song by Throughthewaters <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eu5bBDRpzPM>
Cornerstone by Hillsong <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvLxZEU02ul>
The Lord Is my rock by Freedom Kids <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcnLLPQp38U>
Oh Hallelujah by Jana Alayra <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Br-0-QJptCs>
Hilarious fun with my rock, my sword my shield
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7uflkb92o4>

Ideas to Retell/Explore the Story

The Tree that never fell (A new story to explore the theme)

Caleb is 8 years old and lives with his mum in a small house on a big street. Every weekday, Caleb and his mum take the same walk to school; past the houses, round the corner past the small shop, crossing the road to the park which leads them through to where Caleb's school is. Caleb enjoys this walk, especially the cut through the park. He enjoys watching the seasons change through the year. He especially likes to stop and climb a huge tree that is found on the edge of the park. Caleb doesn't know what type of tree it is but it is large, with a thick round trunk which reaches up to branches that spread out wide, up and outwards, and it has strong roots going down deep and strong.

In the summer Caleb climbs up to the middle branches and hides amongst the green leaves; in the winter he likes to climb to the same branches and sit where he is able to see far across the park. This is his favourite tree. It has stood there since Caleb was born and for many years before that. It has stood as one of many trees that are long gone and forgotten, making way for new houses and streets. It is a good tree.

But Caleb has noticed that the tree isn't looking as strong as it usually does. It seems to be leaning a little to the left. Over time Caleb notices that the ground around the tree is also getting higher, lifting as the tree moves and shifts. This worries Caleb. His mum has suggested he doesn't climb it any more as it doesn't look safe. He begins to talk to people to try to get help for the tree that is obviously struggling.

Caleb is worrying that he has hurt the tree by climbing it but his neighbour explains that the tree is old and over the years the building work around it has damaged its roots; this means the tree needs to regrow them. Will it be able to grow roots before it's too late or will the tree fall first?

Caleb is on a mission. He decides that he is going to save the tree, to stop it from falling, to give it time to put strong roots down. So Caleb goes on a hunt for pieces of wood. He uses old ladders, washing line poles and anything that is tall and strong. The neighbours are curious as they see him carrying them along the street. Some decide to follow him to see what he is doing with all the wood - perhaps he is building something, or making a bonfire. No, Caleb is standing them up against the old tree. He pushes them down into to ground and props the tree up. It looks like a large tepee around the tree, or scaffolding holding up a crumbling building.

The neighbours were so impressed that they all got involved. Bringing hammers and shovels, even more wood, they all build a wooden cage around the tree. It looks good, it looks stable, this will give the tree the time it needs to regrow its roots, deep and strong under the tree. Every day throughout the seasons Caleb would check on his tree, shaking the wood scaffolding to make sure it wasn't starting to wobble.

A few winters later, the whole street gathered to remove the wood that had held the tree for so long. The tree still leaned a little to the left, but now its roots were strong and it was out of danger. Caleb had made a difference to the tree, but the tree had made a difference to him too. It had reminded Caleb that we need strong roots to be able to grow well, and sometimes we need a little bit of support around us to let that happen.

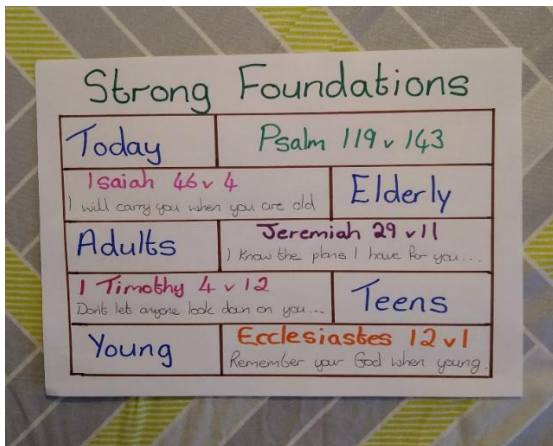
Caleb doesn't climb the old tree anymore but he does like to sit under it and read a good book.

Modern Parables

Here are some story books that you might like to read together exploring the same theme
The 3 little pigs by Give us a story <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGFjzp8w11E>

Dinner table Chat Activities

Draw a wall with large bricks on a piece of paper. Each meal time, use this placemat to talk about what Bible passages are important to you. Make a note of them on your wall as a reminder. By the end of the week you will have a full place mat showing the words from the Bible that we build our life on. (You could also do this with a real wall made of Lego, Duplo or Jenga blocks, you could attach or write the readings on the bricks)



Discuss: when life is feeling shaky or you are having a wobble, which Bible passages do you find helpful?

If you could only have one passage from the Bible and had to lose the rest, which passage would it be?

Which passage in the Bible do you think is the most important for your life and why?

Would you recommend different passages for different times in life? E.g. for those who are young, for those who are teenagers, those who are adults, those who are elderly.

Game: Flour Tower

You will need a plate with a pile of flour on it (like a sandcastle – try filling an empty yogurt pot firmly with flour and then turning it out on the plate) and then carefully place a sweet on top of the flour tower.

Using a knife, take it in turns to cut away a slice of the tower. See how many slices before the tower falls.



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Whoever made the last slice before it fell, now has to find the sweet in the collapsed pie, using only their mouth. Lots of messy fun!

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at home

What's in the box?



What treasures can you find to put in the box for your little ones to explore?

Perhaps older children could help find the things.



Use a box or a bag to hold the treasures and encourage any little ones to explore what's in the box/bag each week to go with the Bible story.

This week's Bible story is:

Strong Foundations in Shaky Times

Matthew 7 verses 24-28



Soft, powdery surface in a tray such as sand or flour.

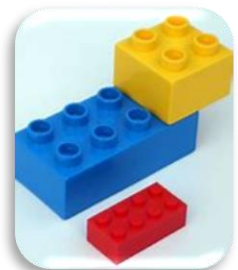
Something with rainbow colours for God's promise



Sticks or twigs



Watch out for this going in eyes, nose or mouth



Building bricks and/or a real brick



Sand toys

Pray Together

A Prayer in the Pocket



You will need a pebble and some paints.

Decorate your pebble or rock with the words "God is my ROCK" or something similar to remind you that you can trust in God to hold you firm even in the shakiest of times.



If your pebble is small enough, you could carry it in your pocket as a reminder each time you touch it or feel it through the lining. If it is a bit bigger, why not keep it beside your bed or on your desk to remind you that God is there.

Tell God all the things that are worrying you and be confident that you have firm foundations.

Sand-Timer Reflection

You will need: 2 small plastic bottles with flat-top lids
Firm card
Strong glue and tape
Fine sand or salt

What you do:

Cut the round end off each of the bottles – make sure you get a straight line. (An adult may need to do this with a craft knife)
Make a hole in the lid of one of the bottles. Remove the lid of the other bottle.

Turn the bottle with the lid upside down and glue it to the top of the other bottle with strong glue – you may also want to tape around the join to make it secure.

Securely glue a rectangle of firm card to the end of the lower bottle. Make sure there are no gaps. The card must completely cover the base of the bottle.





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Fill the upper bottle with fine sand or salt – it should immediately start to trickle down into the bottom bottle. Now glue a rectangle of firm card on top of the upper bottle, again making sure there are no gaps.

As you turn your sand timer over, sit and watch the sand or salt trickle through and use the time to be still with God. What is God saying to you in this quiet time?

Pray Together

A simple house blessing

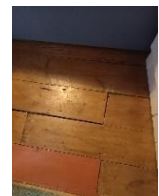
We walk around our homes all the time, from room to room, and hardly ever think about the building we are in: how it keeps us warm and safe and provides us with shelter. We don't think of the people who worked to provide the materials it is made of, the architects who planned it, the team of people who build it to the right specifications. We just live in it!

Walk around your house and into each room and touch the doorframe as you go. Thank God for the people who made your house, and pray that God will bless each room, filling it with God's Holy Spirit and blessing each person who enters there.



Now take another walk around your house and think of the materials there.

Wood – think of the world we live in, say sorry to God for the way that we pollute and damage the world and ask for help to treat the environment properly.



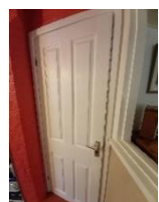
Light – pray for those times which people feel are dark times, times when they are sad or worried. Ask God to help you bring light into those times with your words and actions. Ask God to be near those people and bring them hope and joy.

Heating – pray for comfort and warmth for those who feel cold or alone.



Brick – think of all the people who don't have a safe place to live, those who are homeless or refugees, or in homes where people don't care for them properly. Thank God for your home.

Doors – ask God to bless all those who enter or leave your home and to give you the gift of hospitality.





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@ home

Glass – as you look out of the window, think of all the people who pass by your home. Ask God to help you care about other people and to be outward-looking.

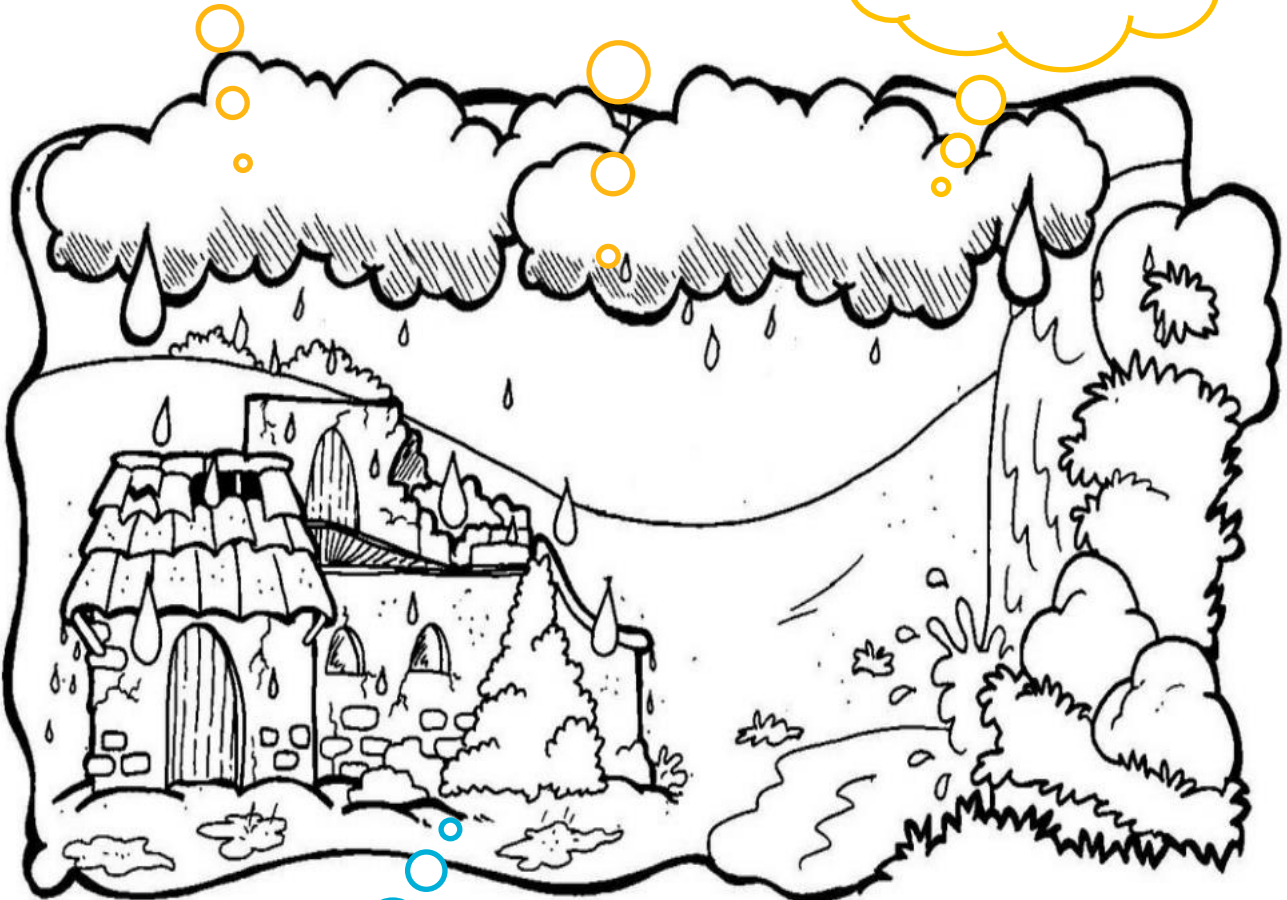
Mirror – finally, take a look in a mirror and thank God for making you you, with all your strengths and weaknesses, qualities and faults. Ask God to bless you and always to be with you in your heart. How can you reflect God’s love and faithfulness as you go about your daily life?



I wonder whether you have ever seen the foundations of a building being built?

I wonder what the most important values that you base your life on might be?

I wonder what things feel like stormy weather or shaky times in your life right now?



I wonder whether you can think of any other stories that Jesus told that remind us to build

I wonder whether you have ever thought of doing a ‘survey’ on what’s important in your life, just like a survey is carried out when a new house is built?

Illustration by Rowderson Rangel via freebibleimages.com



TO DO TOGETHER...

Sand Dough Plaques

You will need: 2 cups sand
1 ½ cups plain flour
1 cup warm water
1 ¼ cups salt

What you do:

Mix together the sand, flour and salt in a large bowl and slowly add the warm water, mixing as you go with a large spoon. If the dough is too sticky, add some more sand or flour. If it is too dry, add some more warm water.

Once it is all mixed together, take it out of the bowl and begin to knead it on a lightly floured surface. It will take less than a minute to come together into a soft and pliable ball very similar in feel and consistency to play dough or salt dough.

Place baking parchment onto a baking tray and create the plaques directly on to the tray. You can form a small ball and flatten to give an irregular shape, don't make it too thick (1-2cm max) as thicker will take longer to dry, depending on what you are making.

To oven dry the items, put them into an oven at a very low temperature.

I put them straight into the oven which was set to 120°C/gas mark 1-2 (approx 250°F) and left them to dry out in there for around four hours. The sand dough will dry hard at different times depending on the thickness of your dough.





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It's important that they are not too thick or else it takes too long for them to dry hard and they can remain a little doughy in the middle. If you find they are hard on the top but not underneath, take them out and gently turn them over, then put them back into the oven for another hour or two to harden the underside.

Now you have turned sand into rock, from a shaky foundation to a strong foundation.



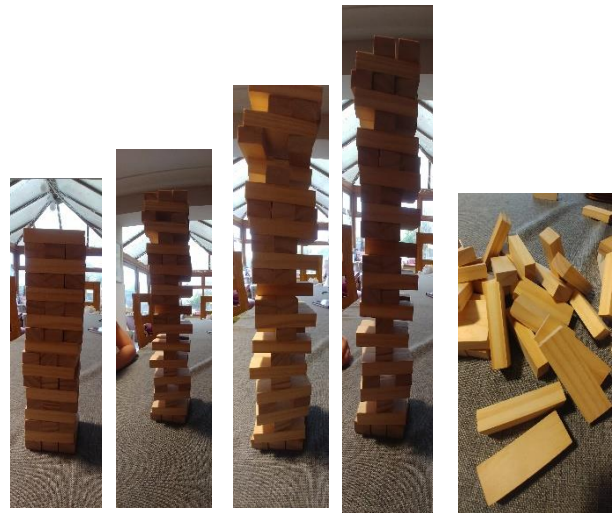
TO DO TOGETHER...

Tumbling Towers

You will need: A set of Jenga or similar game
A variety of firm and soft surfaces to build on e.g. table, towel, cushion etc

What you do:
Build the tower on a flat surface, and then build it up by removing bricks and placing them on top, see how high you can get before everything tumbles.

Try it on different surfaces and see if you can build a higher tower or if it shakes so much it tumbles before you even get to play.





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TO DO TOGETHER...

Sand and Rock Sensory Bin

You will need: A tray or plastic container
Rocks
Sand
Some blocks
Water

What you do:

Place some rocks on one half and some sand on the other.

Using some blocks, build a structure.

Pour some water over the sandy structure and see what happens.

Pour some water over the rocky structure and now see what happens.

You can always add some figures and tell the parable of the two builders as you play.





TO DO TOGETHER...

Rock Cakes

You will need: 225g/8oz self-raising flour
75g/2½oz caster sugar
1 tsp baking powder
125g/4½oz unsalted butter, cut into cubes
150g/5½oz dried fruit
1 free-range egg
1 tbsp milk
2 tsp vanilla extract



Method:

Preheat the oven to 180C/160C Fan/Gas 4. Line a baking tray with baking parchment.

Mix flour, sugar and baking powder in a bowl and rub the butter in between your fingers until the mixture looks like breadcrumbs, then mix in the dried fruit.



In another bowl, beat the egg and milk together with the vanilla extract and then add it to the dry ingredients and stir until you get a thick lumpy dough. If it doesn't stick together properly, add a little bit more milk until it does. It won't be a smooth dough – look at the pictures.



Make balls of dough about the size of a golf ball. Place them on the baking tray, spread out a bit, and press them down slightly. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes until they are a golden brown colour. Allow them to cool a little bit on the tray and then put them on a wire rack to cool. You'll want to eat one to test them – but do save some for the Walking the Way challenge.



Walking the Way

Living the life of Jesus today

**Our Walking the Way Challenge
this time is...**

At Home:

As you walk around your house this week, stop occasionally to touch the door frame of the room you are entering and ask God to bless everyone who enters that room today. You might even want to make a little picture to fasten to the doorframe as a reminder.

Outside:

When you are out and about this week, look out for houses or other buildings being built or surrounded with scaffolding, or houses which have a for sale or for rent sign outside. Think about the people who live there and the people who are working there. You might even like to drop a card through the letterbox wishing them well and say a prayer for God's blessing on the house as you post it.

For Others:

Who can resist a rock cake? Offer some of your rock cakes to your neighbours as a blessing.



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**families
on faith adventures**

at home

Adventurers Go!

You've shared together, now share with us!

Why not send photos of your crafts, your treasure boxes, your Walking the Way challenges - or dress up to make a tableau of the Big Story and take a photo to send in.

Email your photos to: lorraine.webb@urc.org.uk
with parental permission for them to be used in publicity and online URC social media.

Alternatively, share them on our Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/URCchildren.and.youth/>

Remember you can find more resources on our website:
<https://urc.org.uk/resources-for-children-and-youth>

And if you've enjoyed these activities, why not see whether your local church runs Pilots or Friends on Faith Adventures (FOFA) when things get back to normal again.

Created for you by Nicola Grieves (Eastern Synod), Judy Harris (National Synod of Wales), Hannah Middleton (Northern Synod), Philip Ray (Wessex Synod, North), Lorraine Webb (Programme Officer for CYW), and Ruth White (Wessex Synod, South) on behalf of the CYDO+ and Children's and Youth Work team and Pilots.



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