

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:

Blessings

Numbers 6: 22-27



*Illustration by
buecherworm via pixabay.com*



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.

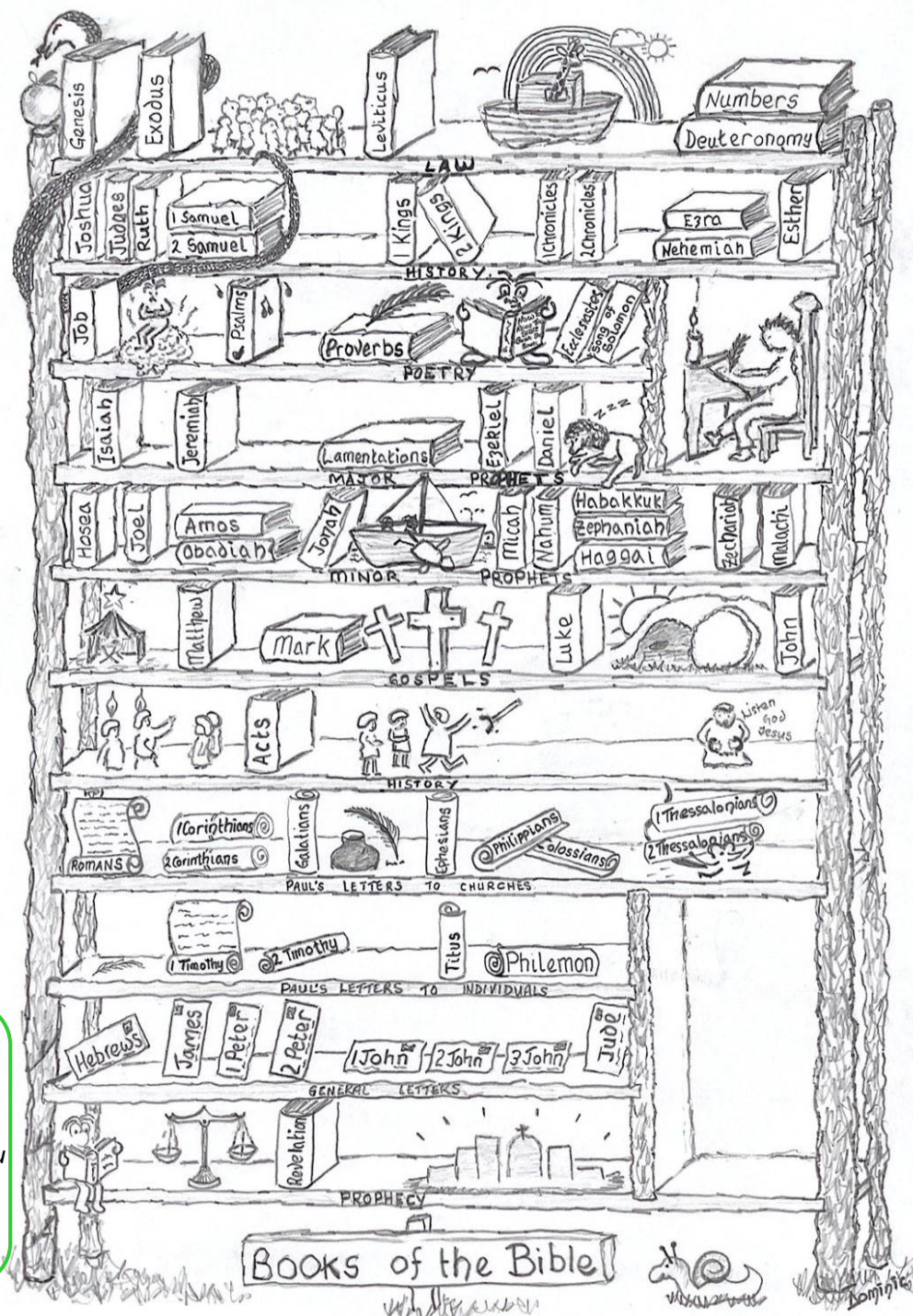
The New Testament tells us the stories of Jesus and his followers. There are 27 books in the New Testament.



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 – Blessings

The book of Numbers was written by Moses around 1400 BC. It tells the stories of the Israelites wandering in the desert for 40 years, after their escape from slavery in Egypt. God has brought them to Mount Sinai and now the people are counted (hence the name of the book) and sorted into tribes. They set up camp. The temple was in the centre with the priests and Levites nearby; then the other eleven tribes around them. They established their laws and rules to keep the camp and people holy as God was going to be among them. God gave them a special blessing to say over each other. It was a reminder that they were God's people, they had God's seal on their lives. Jesus also spoke it over his disciples when he ascended back to heaven.

The Story – Numbers 6 v 22 - 27 (The International Children's Bible)

The Lord said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you should bless the Israelites. Say to them:

*"May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord show you his kindness.*

*May he have mercy on you.
May the Lord watch over you and give you peace."*

"So Aaron and his sons will bless the Israelites with my name. And I will bless them."

Scriptures quoted from the International Children's Bible®, copyright ©1986, 1988, 1999, 2015 by Tommy Nelson.
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Online versions of the story

Watch and listen

What does it mean to bless? Animation by Brunstad TVKids

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tRGOs8m7oc>

How the blessing is used in Jewish homes every Friday. Animation by Bimbam

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VO3irwYbljE>

God Loves us Animation by Crossroad Kids <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npVjElt4fHM>

God is always with you by Douglas the puppet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWIwdDtuwGU>

Dance and sing

God is for me by Lifetree Kids <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcN-4gkyaxq>

God your good to me by Vineyard Kids <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzZiwHjkaOU>

The Blessing in Makaton by Makaton UK <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=va048-XxFTI&t=65s>

May the God of Hope by Doug Horley

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQAtIWOLHYc&t=89s>

All that I am by Parkview Kids <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfQ-ulLemWw>

Ideas to Retell/Explore the Story

Original Story about passing a blessing on.

Alex and Hannah are twins. They don't do everything together, but they do like going on adventures and exploring. One Saturday afternoon they decided that they would go exploring in the woods near to their house (something they often did on weekends). No matter how many times they go to the woods, they always find something new; perhaps an animal skull, or a tiny blue egg. Once they even found a baby squirrel that had fallen out of the tree and they carefully placed it back in. Today would be no different. What would they find in the woods today?

Alex had run on ahead and was leaping over the low branches, pretending that Hannah was chasing him. Hannah was oblivious to the game and was walking quite slowly as she was looking for something special. She had read about an unusual flower that is bright orange and only blooms one week in the year. She had been dreaming about finding one for weeks.

Suddenly out of the corner of her eye she saw a flash of orange from among the greenery. She shouted Alex to come back. Alex spun round on his heels and ran towards her, hoping she had found something full of maggots, his favourite thing.

Alex and Hannah reached out through the bushes that snagged at their skin. It wasn't a flower and it wasn't covered in maggots. It was a box, an orange box.

It didn't look old and it had a note attached to it. It read "Congratulations on finding this special box, everything in it is for you".

They couldn't believe their eyes; their hearts beat fast with excitement as they ran home clutching the box tightly. They ran up to their bedroom and, taking a deep breath, opened the box.

The room seemed to fill with light. They looked in and saw that the box was full to the brim with blessings. They had heard about blessings and how they are very special, and now they had a whole box of them.

The children decided that they would split them evenly and have half each. As they both sat on their beds with their own pile of blessings, they felt very happy. Alex put his under his bed and every day, before and after school, he would get them out and count them again. Hannah liked displaying hers all around her bed and windowsill so that they caught the light and made patterns on the wall.

But, over time, Alex and Hannah started to feel that they were missing something. They didn't feel as excited or happy when they looked at their blessings; in fact it almost made them sad to see the big pile in their room.

The box had said it was for them, but the children began to wonder if they should give them to other people, share them out to all their friends. And not just their friends but strangers too; as many people as possible.

That's just what they did. Over the next few days, they gave every single blessing away. They gave them to their friends at school, their neighbours, they left them on seats on the bus for others to find. They even scattered a few back in the woods with notes attached. It took a long time but soon all the blessings were given out. Everyone they gave a blessing to was given a note saying, "When you are ready, give your blessing away, pass it on to someone else."

Alex and Hannah still enjoyed playing in their woods and still found amazing things. Many weeks passed and one day Hannah put her hand in her pocket at school and her hand touched something that wasn't meant to be there. She recognised it immediately - it was a blessing. Someone had secretly left one for her. It had a note attached that read "When you are ready, give your blessing away, pass it on to someone else." Hannah smiled and ran to find Alex who was in the library. He was so excited to see her and they both started talking at the same time. Alex had one too! Someone had left it in his bag for him to find.

The children laughed and talked about how their blessings had been passed on and on and on and had eventually made their way back to them. It was good to see one again. Alex put it under his bed and looked at it every day and Hannah put it on the windowsill where it could catch the light.

Don't worry they aren't going to keep them. Just for now, for a short while; whilst they decide who to pass it on to next.....

How is this ancient blessing used today?

This blessing is used in many Jewish and Christian ceremonies. Jewish parents will speak it over each of their children every Friday night at the beginning of Shabbat.

We often hear it spoken over people at their wedding service or when a baby is baptised or dedicated.

You could learn the blessing and speak it over your family and friends over the coming weeks.



**families
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at home

Modern Parables – A modern story exploring the same themes.

Have you filled your bucket today? By Carol McCloud read by Kids and Company

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOJy8-OC0iU>

Table Top Discussions

Each day over a mealtime, have a quick conversation. Here are a few questions to get you going.

- The blessing talks about God watching over us and giving us peace. What does this mean? Does it mean we will never be afraid or struggle?
- What are some of the ways that your family has been blessed over the past 15 months?
- How can you as a family, bless others over the coming weeks?
- #Blessed is a hashtag that is often seen online, when someone has something good happen to them. Does this mean you are only blessed when good things are happening? Can you be blessed whilst living in poverty or in dangerous places?
- What difference would it make to your life, if you spoke this blessing over each other every day?

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.

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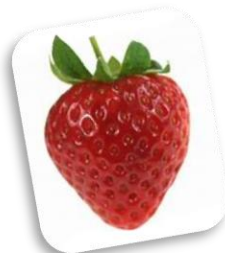
Something that feels nice
– something soft or baby
cream to rub in



Place your hand on your child's
head and ask God to bless them.
Encourage your child to do the
same for you saying "God bless".



Something with rainbow
colours for God's promise



Something
that tastes nice



Something with a gentle sound like a tiny
bell or a rain stick or a bottle with rice in

**Please supervise small
children! Watch out for
chain or string getting
caught around fingers,
wrists or neck etc.**



Something that smells nice (if using perfume or
essential oils, just use a tiny amount on a cotton
wool ball, a piece of cloth or on a teddy)

Pray Together

God's Blessing envelopes

You will need a square of patterned paper - wrapping paper is ideal as it is plain on one side.

Cut out a heart shape and on the plain side write the blessing from the Bible story or create your own blessing.

Fold in the two sides of the heart and then fold over the top of the heart to make the bottom of the envelope.

The point at the bottom of the heart now becomes the top part of the envelope. Fold this over to complete the envelope.

Ask God to bless your letter and then share it with someone who you want God to bless.



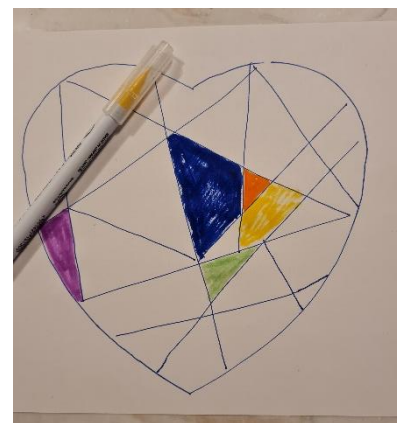
Heart Boxes

Sometimes we do not have words to say but we want to be able to pray for other people. God know what is in our hearts.

Draw a heart on a piece of paper and divide it up into random shapes. Using different colours for the people you want to bless, colour in the boxes you have created. While you do this, you could listen to some music.

There is a wonderful blessing song sung by children from around the world with the words from Numbers 6 v22-27.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiWZXLsdE9w>



Pray together

Tea Pot blessings

It is a great idea to share God's Blessing with one another. One way to do this is to make yourself into a teapot shape. Hold one arm up to be the spout and open your palm flat facing up. This is the hand for you to receive the blessing from God. Using your other hand, touch the shoulder of the person you want to bless. You are being open to connect with God and then passing on the blessing.



Try doing this with your family or friend or in your church group. It is a great way to pray when you are all ages altogether.

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at home

I wonder what is your favourite part of Aaron's blessing?

I wonder why this Bible passage is a favourite one for weddings and baptisms?

I wonder if you can think of a time when you really felt God was blessing you?



Illustration by lambsongs.co.nz via www.freebibleimages.com

I wonder what you think a blessing might look or feel like?

I wonder why the act of blessing someone stopped being something we do?

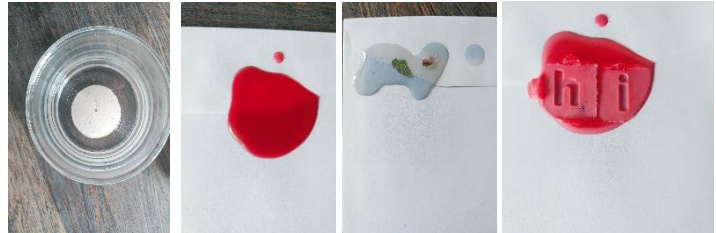


TO DO TOGETHER...

Blessings Messy Play - Seals

You will need:

- Wax crayon or old candle
- A stamp or an old cork
- An envelope or piece of paper
- Optional – petals



What you do:

Ask an adult to help with this. Place a piece of crayon or candle in a microwavable dish, and melt it for about 1 ½ mins.

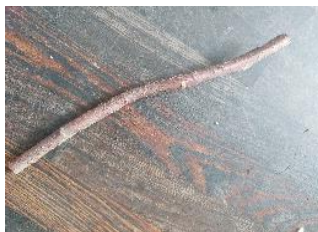
If you want some petals in your seal, place them in position first, then ask an adult to pour the hot wax carefully onto the envelope.

Wait until the wax begins to solidify again, and press your seal into the wax, creating an imprint. (If the wax hasn't cooled enough, the wax will stick to the stamp).



People used to put their seal on an envelope or letter or important paper to mark it as being theirs. A blessing is like God putting a seal on us. Maybe as you create your seal, think about the blessing in today's story and thank God that you belong to the family of God.

Blessing stick



You will need: A stick and some pieces of wool, ribbon or thread.

What you do: Think about the blessings you have, (family, friends, fun, food, shelter, health) and choose a colour for each one. Wind the wool around your stick and as you do, think of the blessing and thank God for it.

As you change colour, do the same for each blessing.

Keep your blessing stick and say Aaron's blessing when you hold it. You could carry it with you wherever you go as a reminder that God is with you and you are blessed.



TO DO TOGETHER...

Umbrella blessings

You will need:

- 2 small cardboard circles
- 1 long strip of card
- 7 skewers
- Tissue paper
- Sellotape



What you do:

Cut a small slit into the circles of card and make them into cone shapes.

Place the skewers evenly on top of one of the cones using Sellotape.

Carefully mark the triangle of tissue and cut it out. Then tape it in place to fill the triangle space between two skewers.

Repeat this for all the sections.

Place the other cone shape on top and secure with some tape.

Measure the long strip of card to fit your head and tape it together.

Tape this into the umbrella.

Carefully draw with felt pens the word "Bless" onto the umbrella.

Blessings are usually done with someone placing their hands on your head. People pray good things over you. This umbrella will sit on your head and will shade you from the sun and filter coloured light on your way, reminding you that you are blessed.





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**families
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at home

Walking the Way

Living the life of Jesus today

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

At Home:

It's a surprisingly lovely thing to bless someone. Try it in your family – just place a hand on someone's head and ask God to love them and protect them through the day or night. Maybe you could do it before leaving the house or before going to bed each day. If you feel awkward putting a hand on their head, put a hand on their shoulder or over their hand.

Outside:

We can speak a blessing into the world too, putting God's name on creation and marking it as God's. When you're out and about, look at the trees, the houses, the roads, the flowers, the birds and whisper "God is there".

For Others:

Make a meal or a gift for someone and pray a blessing into the thing you make. Pray that God will use your hospitality and generosity to bring happiness and good things to the person you're making them for.



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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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