

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 family or friends via the internet.

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!**



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

This week's Bible story is:

Can We Go Back Now?

Psalm 137 verses 1-5



From



and



Illustration by

Edmund Bendemann: 'Die Trauenden Juden im Exil'

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.

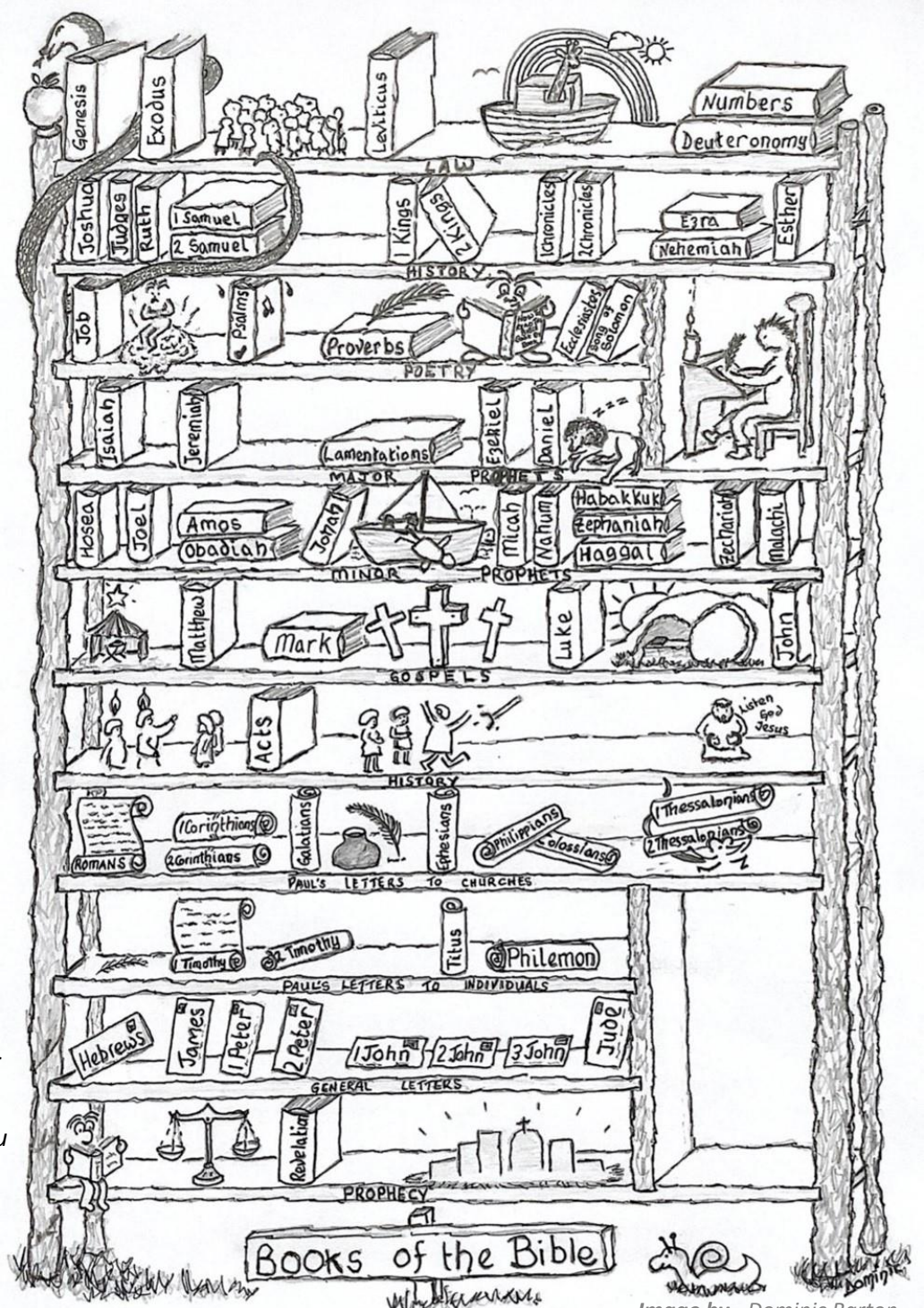
The New Testament tells us the stories of Jesus and his followers. There are 27 books in the New Testament.



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: Psalms

The book of Psalms was written between 1400 and 450 BC. King David wrote over half of the 150 Psalms but Psalm 137 was probably written by people who were in the exile in Babylon as a way of telling their story.

Psalms is meant to be a timeless book with words that speak into all situations and eras. Psalms are poems that are meant to be put to music.

In this psalm, the Israelites have been taken from their land and are now living in captivity in Babylon, where they lived for over 70 years. They are being asked to perform and sing for their captors. It's a song about missing your home and wanting to go back.

This story helps us to explore how we can be who we are, even in a new place.

Online versions of the story

Watch and Listen

God is with us always by Douglas the puppet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWlwdDtuwGU&t=13s>

Ask a refugee by the Guardian News. Children in the UK ask questions of refugee children

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqZChKhy9Lc>

Dance and Sing

Every Praise by Sing Gloria <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oxo84zrwu4>

Who you say I am by Yancy Kids Worship <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUfwoUPTq68>

God is with us by Up Street <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peaU-FiyJhA>

Rivers of Babylon by Boney M <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3ONxoDb8Fq>

Let me tongue be silenced by Francesca Rosa <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UAOPvz5HEq>

The Story: Psalm 137 verses 1-4 (from The International Children's Bible)

By the rivers in Babylon we sat and cried when we remembered Jerusalem.

On the poplar trees nearby we hung our harps.

Those who captured us asked us to sing.

Our enemies wanted happy songs.

They said, "Sing us a Temple song from Jerusalem!"

But we cannot sing songs about the Lord while we are in this foreign country!

Scripture quotations are taken from the International Children's Bible®, copyright © 1986, 1988, 1999, 2015 by Tommy Nelson. Used by permission.

Ideas to Retell/Explore the Story

Here is a new story for you to share together to help you think about what it might have been like for the Israelites to find themselves in a completely different place – somewhere that made them feel homesick.

We just want to go home!

They were stuck and lost!

Their beloved spaceship sat, half submerged, in a crater filled with oozy mud that bubbled and burped unexpectedly. It looked like it had been dropped into a stew pot by an absent-minded giant, then forgotten! Any trip outside was an ordeal, they'd made windscreen wipers for their helmets and jet-washed themselves before they stepped back into the ship – but there was still mud everywhere! The sparkling, white control panels were a dull grey now and no amount of wet wipes could stop the walls sounding sticky when you touched them. They were no longer where they'd come from and they hadn't made it to where they were going. Everyone had had enough! Everyone wanted to go home!

It was supposed to have been a routine journey but something had gone wrong and The Captain had spent the last month feeling angry and annoyed. The ship's log was filled with questions: about fuel and co-ordinates; about whether enemy spies were more likely to be hiding in the research station or the toilets and whether or not his crew were avoiding him.

The crew were avoiding him but they were also extremely busy – and not just with cleaning mud off all the spaceship's surfaces. There were tests to run (how poisonous were this planet's plants?), research to be completed (how many jet-packs would it take to lift a stranded spacecraft out of belching mud?) and important questions about the canteen's menu to be answered (which was worse? Sausage and Mash flavoured jelly or Stewed Apple Lasagne?). They had very little spare time.

Every night, as the suns set and the sky glowed gold and green, the crew sat together and allowed themselves to remember. One thing each that they missed holding or smelling or tasting from their home planet and one thing they hoped they would see again one day soon.

Nobody felt like singing joyfully – but it was a start. It that was enough to keep them going, ready for the next day and whatever it might hold.

I'm somewhere new and I don't like it here.

Change is difficult and it is ok to be sad but over time we learn to settle and make the most of the situation we find ourselves in.

The Israelites were asking God to punish their captors and to rescue them from captivity. In Jeremiah 29 v 4 – 7 we see God's response to them.

Jeremiah 29: 4-7: This is what the Lord of heaven's armies, the God of Israel, says to all those people he sent away from Jerusalem as captives to Babylon: "Build houses and settle in the land. Plant gardens and eat the food you grow. Get married and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons. Let your daughters be married so they may also have sons and daughters. Have many children and grow in number in Babylon. Don't become fewer in number. Also do good things for the city where I sent you as captives. Pray to the Lord for the city where you are living. If there is peace in that city, you will have peace also."

Scriptures quoted from the International Children's Bible®, copyright ©1986, 1988, 1999, 2015 by Tommy Nelson. Used by permission.

God asks them to change their attitude and mindset, make their home there, settle down, be part of the community, grow stronger for when the times comes that they will return to their homeland.

Discuss: How does this reflect what we see happening in our world today?

What's In Your Bag activity

Imagine that you are having to leave your home, either to avoid danger or perhaps because you have been taken captive. You don't have long to pack and you can only take one small bag. What would put into your bag?

What's In A Refugee's Backpack by AJPlus

Share this clip to see what real-life refugees actually carried with them. It's supported by the documents below if you want more information.



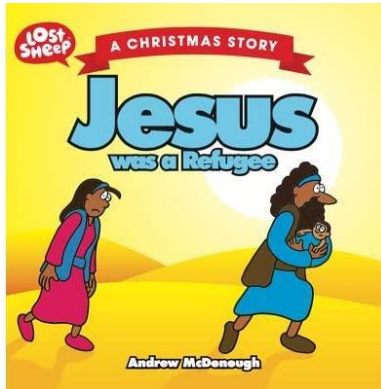
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3xAyLI64H8>

<https://medium.com/uprooted/what-s-in-my-bag-758d435f6e62>

Create a Life Story Bag

An adaptation of the What's in the bag activity. Create a bag that is filled with things that can help you tell the story of your life so far, the highs and lows, the times you moved around and so on. Fill the bag and then take it in turns to use the contents to tell your stories to each other.

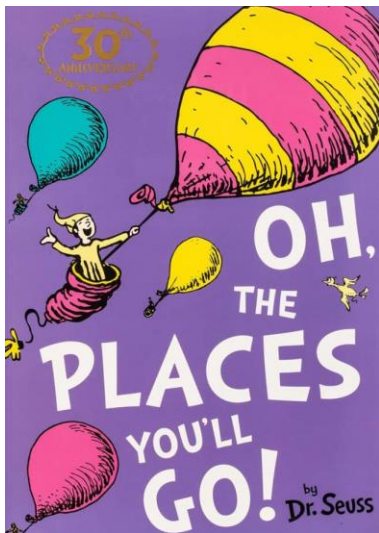
Modern Parables – books that explore the same theme



'Jesus was a Refugee' by Andrew McDonough

A great reminder that Jesus and his family had to flee their country to avoid an angry king. What did it mean for them to be refugees?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GpVHw0U8co>



'Oh The Places You'll Go' by Dr Seuss

Congratulations!
Today is your day.
You're off to Great Places!
You're off and away!

A fun journey through life's ups and downs – from fun times and triumphs, to lurches and slumps! Celebrating life's journey with a reminder that you can be amazing wherever you are.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abw43kcLrbq>

For more activities and ideas on this theme see

[https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/1638/09/Families_on_Faith_Adventures - week 66 - Live Well.pdf](https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/1638/09/Families_on_Faith_Adventures_-_week_66_-_Live_Well.pdf)

Table Top Discussions

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

- *Think about the moves you are experiencing at the moment, new school, new house, new job and so on. Whilst it is OK to be sad about the things we leave behind, how can we make the most of this new opportunity?*
- *What can we see in this story that shows us that God was with the Israelites, even when they were taken from their country? I wonder how hard it was to keep trusting in God during their captivity?*
- *Jesus' final promise to his disciples (and to us) before he left to go back to heaven, was "I am with you always, even to the end of time." What does this mean to you in a time of change?*
- *Consider the Israelites in this story: there are more emotions in the story than just simply happy or sad. What other emotions do you think people were experiencing? I wonder what emotions you are experiencing at this time of year?*
- *What can we do for those around us who are finding themselves in a new situation? How can we help?*

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.



Children's instruments or something to make a noise with

A child's suitcase with a few things you might pack for a holiday



Something with rainbow colours for God's promise



Pictures of places the child goes and had to settle e.g. nursery school, swimming pool etc

Pray Together

Tears!

You will need: A shallow tray filled with sand.

I wonder have you ever felt sad. Perhaps you 'put on a brave face'?

It is ok to feel sad and God is with us in our sad times.



Draw tear shapes in the sand with your finger. As you draw, talk to God about the things that make you sad and ask God to be with you.



**Dear God,
Please help me
not to feel sad
and wipe away my tears.
Amen**

As you say the prayer, wipe the tears away you have drawn in the sand.

Life Story Prayers

This prayer activity will work well with the Life Story Bag activity

You will need: A piece of string
A bead



Cut a length of string and thread on a bead. Tie the string tightly to form a circle. If you don't have a bead, you could use a piece of hollow pasta (macaroni or penne) or make one by rolling paper.

Find somewhere quiet to sit and then slowly move your bead around the circle. Think about the story of your life, the highs and lows, the times you moved and the moves and transitions that you might have to make that worry you. Take a moment to pause with the bead as you remember these things. Talk to God about how you are feeling. Remember, as you pray, that God's love is never ending just like your prayer circle, and that God is with you throughout every aspect of your life, just as the string passes through the middle of the bead.

Pray Together

Some ideas for sad, happy and praise prayers

Sadness to Joy!

*Lord Jesus,
turn our sadness to joy,
turn our joy to laughter,
turn our laughter to song.
Amen.*

A Prayer Shout

*Who can take our sadness and our tears
and turn them into joy?*

You can, God.

*Who can fill us with your spirit
and bring new life?*

You can God

*We thank you God
We thank you, God,
that you know who and where we are,
and you are always with us.*

Amen.

Praise

*Praise to the Lord who shelters us,
as on our way we go.*

*Praise to the Lord who protects us,
from each and every foe.*

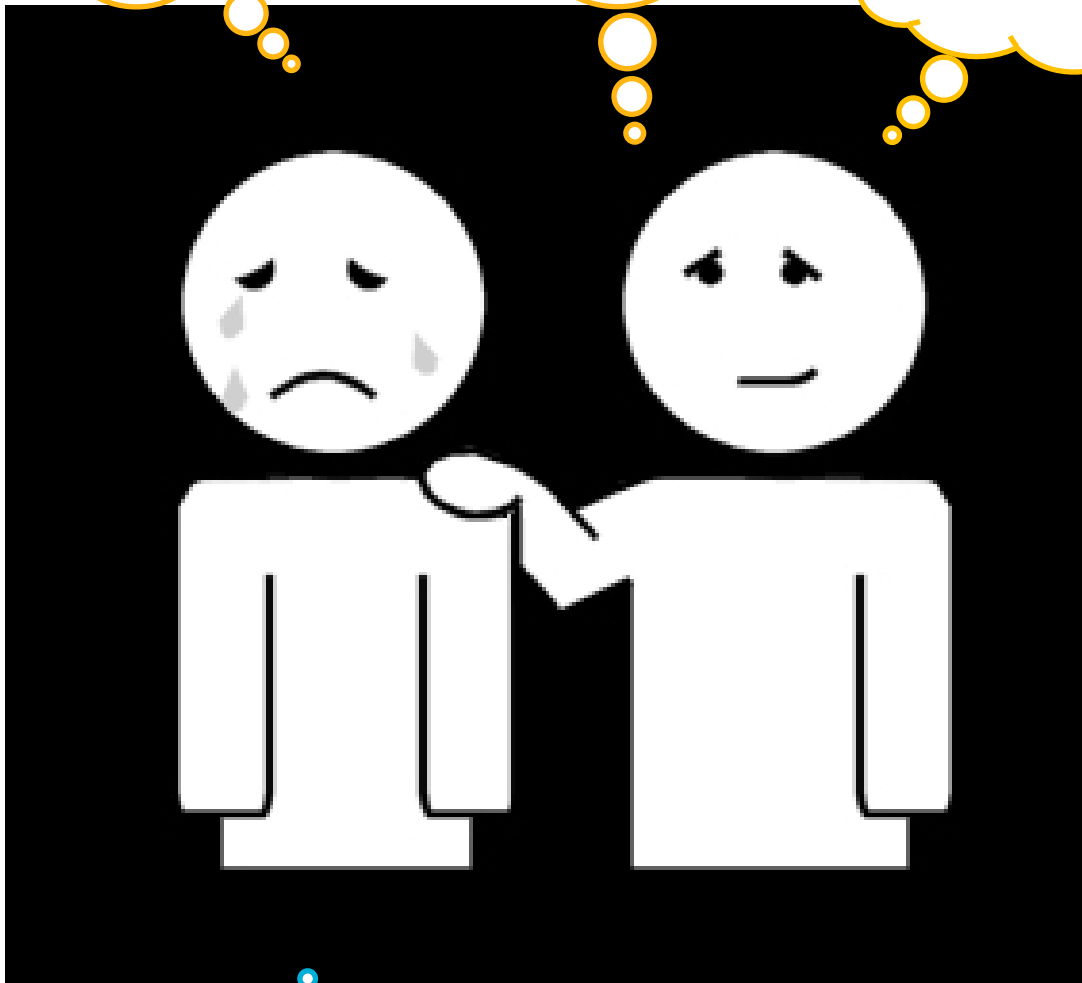
*Praise to the Lord who guides us,
and shows us where to go.*

Amen.

*I wonder how many
different emotions you
can name?*

*I wonder if you can
remember any big
changes in your life and
how you coped with
them?*

*I wonder how things
turned out for the
Israelites in Babylon?*



*I wonder what you
do to help feel more
comfortable when
things change?*

*I wonder why we find
change so difficult
and whether it is ever
important to
experience change?*

Illustration from
Edupics.com



To Do Together...



Whirligig

You will need: 8 strips of coloured paper. (1½ cm x 28cm)
4 circles (4cm diameter)
Glue
Wooden skewer

What you do:

Put some glue on one of the circles and arrange the strips of paper evenly around the circle.

Keep adding glue as they overlap around the circle. Cover the top with another circle to secure them in place.

Now do the same with another circle. This time bring the loose ends of the paper strips up and attach them to the circle. Once they are all attached with glue, cover again with another circle to secure them.

Now you are going to put the wooden skewer through the centre of both circles of paper. You may want to create a small hole using a pin to get it started, then pushed the pointy end of the skewer up through the centre of the paper spinner.

On the top circle, cover the top with tape to keep it from moving, and do the same on the underside of the top circle too. (You want it to be as secure as possible so if you have a hot/cold glue gun, use this instead with adult help).

The bottom hole will need to be stretched out just a little bit. Just move the skewer around in the hole to make it a little wider. This will allow it to spin freely.

Now you can play with your Whirligig paper spinner toy! Just roll the stick between both hands and watch it twirl!

Life can leave us in a spin just like we heard about the people in our story, but God is with us wherever we are.





To Do Together...



Bag Tags

You will need: A circle of card

Some images from where you were born or where you live (a street map, photos of your area, a flag from there you were born, but nothing with your address on or which would identify your home to someone else)

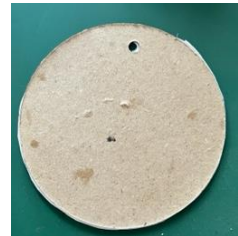
What you do:

Glue onto the circle of card the images you have collected.

Punch a hole into the card and attach some string to it.

Attach it to your bag as a reminder of home.

We sometimes find ourselves in a different place from where we call home. This tag reminds us that we can be a part of the community where we find ourselves until we can return home if we still choose to, just like the people in the psalm.





To Do Together...



Steady Hand Game

You will need:

- A board
- Some pipe cleaners
- A lollipop stick
- Shaving foam (optional)

What you do:

Twist two pipe cleaners together to make one very long one.

Attach one end of the long pipe cleaner to a board. Then shape the pipe cleaner into a wiggly line with bends and changes of direction. If you want it to be firmer, you could use wire instead.

Take one smaller pipe cleaner and make it into a loop and attach it to a lollipop stick.

Slip the loop over the long pipe cleaner or wire, then secure the other end of the long pipe cleaner/wire to the other end of the board.

Carefully move the loop over the wiggle, without touching it. If you do touch it, the whole thing shakes, so you have to have a steady hand. See if you can get from one end to the other without letting the sides of the loop touch the wiggly pipe cleaner.

If you want to make it really messy, spray some shaving foam over the loop so it will show on the wiggly line wherever you have touched it with the loop.

In the psalm, the people were told to keep steady. Life often has lots of twists and changes, hellos and goodbyes, new starts, etc and we can go through all sorts of emotions. We can be nervous or anxious about new starts and sad about saying goodbye to people and places we love. But God will hold us steady and help us keep moving forward.



Walking the Way

Living the life of Jesus today

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

Everyday Faith:

Each day this week, try this way of praying. Look back over your shoulder. Thank God for all the good things that have happened and for being with you through the hard times. Look down at your feet and thank God for all the good things about your life today and ask God to be with you in the hard things you're dealing with today. Then look forwards (maybe with your hand on your forehead as though looking into the distance) and thank God for the promise that God will be with you in all that the future holds, no matter where you may be or how you may feel. Ask God to help you to stay true to yourself and to God, no matter what.

Scrapbooking:

Why not design a map of your life journey so far? Put a bend in the road where you've had a change or transition. Maybe put a signpost to show the people who have helped you through those changes? Don't finish your map on where you are today – find a way to show that your journey carries on and that God will be with you on that journey, through all the changes and new experiences.

Take it Further:

Read our previous issue about the exile to Babylon in
https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/1638/09/Families_on_Faith_Adventures_-_week_66_-_Live_Well.pdf

Find out more about child refugees on
<https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response/refugee-children-crisis/what-is-refugee> .

Perhaps you could pray for refugees, perhaps you could even do something more practical like donating items or money to a charity supporting refugees. Better still, do you know someone who is a refugee? How could you help them feel welcome?



The
United
Reformed
Church

**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: lorrainewebb@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

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