Faith Adventures for Children Together

Free to use – please acknowledge when using beyond local church children's and youth work so others can find and use the resource themselves.

Committed to URC Children Together: enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus together in the home, church and beyond.

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link: **www.bit.ly/FACT-how-to-sheet**

Title: Psalm 27 v 7 – 8, Psalm 62 v 5 – 8, Psalm 4 v 8, Psalm 30 v 5 and 11 – 12

Theme: Advent in the style of….creative prayer
Advent waiting and journeying

Contents:

Introduction 1
Together 2
Experience 3
Explore.....4
Express 11
Handouts.....15

Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning? Please use this section as a reference and information guide for leaders only – we don't expect it to be read out to the children.

This week we offer a session plan with a difference. Our session is based around prayer stations that explore Advent using different Psalms. The prayer stations cover the explore, creative response and prayers section.

These stations offer children the opportunity to reflect and pray as they prepare for Christmas. We have included elements that you might do together as a group, to introduce the theme at the beginning and to bring the group together again at the end after the group have journeyed around the different stations.

This also offers an intergenerational opportunity, the stations could be used in a café church or intergenerational service or perhaps you could open your church during Advent offering one prayer station a week, as a prayer space in the church. If the children have already used the stations they could take responsibility for doing them each week having done the whole set.

Each prayer station should take around 5 – 10 minutes to complete and will include:

Two wondering questions, one about the passage and one personal reflection

Something physical/practical to do as you pray

The chosen Bible passage

An optional take away item

Together – prayer and games

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

Gathering prayer

Jesus, our friend,
(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

Be with us today,
(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

As we share together,
(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

Pray together,
(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

Play together,
(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

And get to know you better,
(point up with one hand)

As children together in your family.
(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

AMEN
(Two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.
Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.
Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,
adventuring together with you wherever we may go.
Amen

Active game - Obstacle course

Mary and Joseph had a long journey to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, approximately 80-90 miles, and would have taken them up to seven days. The journey would have been

difficult, especially as Mary was nine months pregnant, and if you are using the URC Advent resource, they didn't have the luxury of a camel.

You will need:

- tables and chairs to go under, over or around
- balls or beanbags to dribble or throw into a bucket or similar vessel
- hula hoops could be used for them to step through
- any items that you can inventively (but safely) use to create an obstacle course

Create an obstacle course for those gathered to follow. Depending on the size of your group you can use this either as a timed race for each person or have two identical courses and have teams race against each other.

Quieter game - I Went on a Journey

I Went on a Journey is a memory-based circle game adapted from the classic game "I Went to the Market."

Have all players sit in a circle. The first player starts the game by saying, "I went on a journey and I took..." followed by an item of their choice (for example: "I went on a journey and I took some water"). The second player repeats the first player's item and adds their own to the list (for example: "I went on a journey and I took some water and a backpack"). Play continues clockwise around the circle. Each subsequent player must recite the entire list of accumulated items in the correct order before adding a new item to the end of the chain.
is a memory-based circle game adapted from the classic game "I Went to the Market."

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

We offer these videos to be used in together time before breaking off to do the prayer stations.

Where can I find the story online?
Under-fives: What is Psalms animation Crossroads Kids Club
https://youtu.be/QwQ5FCJKWz4?si=dRVuwcsGRA98Desd
Five-to-elevens: Children retell Psalm 130 as they discuss advent (Hope) by Clearview community Church
https://youtu.be/FKoFtZbDNIQ?si=70ztOcX_IK2ifZ-u

Songs to support the story
Under-fives: God promised a saviour by Grace Melody studios
https://youtu.be/zquteB-QG8s?si=P5GsHisr3BjsbI5r

Five-to-elevens: Prince of peace by Monica Scott Music
https://youtu.be/pnlg3zfTXZE?si=0VmVNEAtmLcZ2zjW

Explore – ways into the theme

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A new way to explore the theme

Prayer stations
Four stations exploring waiting and journeying in Advent each using different Psalms



PRAYER STATIONS ONE

Journeying towards God, Psalm 27 v 7-8 New Living Translation

7 Hear me as I pray, O Lord.
Be merciful and answer me!
8 My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me."
And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming."

Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

You will need:

- a Bible open at the passage
- the Bible passage on some small cards, enough for each participant to take away
- if using a copy of the passage with Widgit imagery, enough for each participant who would find the imagery useful
- an old telephone(s) (you can use an old landline phone, mobile, just a receiver or even a children's pull along telephone)

- I wonder why God says, "Come and talk with me,"? How did the Psalm writer feel as they answer, "LORD, I am coming."?
- I wonder when you find it easiest to "come and talk with" God? What helps you respond to God's invitation?

Set up the table with the old telephone, Bible, cards with the passage and questions.

What you do:

Invite people to read the Bible passage a couple of times and reflect on what speaks to them.

When they are ready, pick up the phone and either talk to God, or just listen, as you would listen to a friend talking. How does their heart respond?

PRAYER STATION TWO



Waiting in Hope Psalm 62: 5–8 - International Children's Bible

I wait patiently for God to save me.
Only he gives me hope.
He is my rock, who saves me.
He protects me like a strong, walled city.
I will not be defeated.
My honour and salvation come from God.
He is my mighty rock and my protection.

People, trust God all the time.
Tell him all your problems.
God is our protection.

The Holy Bible, International Children's Bible® Copyright© 1986, 1988, 1999, 2015 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission.

You will need:

- A Bible open at the passage
- the Bible text central on A4 paper, enough for each participant
- if using a copy of the passage with Widgit imagery enough for each participant who would find the imagery useful
- felt pens and a cloth
- a nativity scene that can be freely played with. You could use the URC Advent resource for 2026 if you have one available.
- a battery operated candle
- cloths to cover the table - two cloths could be used e.g. a dark one and a light one to represent how hope can be a light in the darkness.
- Prayers printed

Cover the table with the cloths. Place the Bible open in the centre of the table and the lit candle behind it. To one side have laminated copies of the passage along with felt tip pens and cloths. On the other side place the nativity scene and the Wigit copy of the passage.

For under 5's

Using the nativity scene, ask if they are able to identify the characters in the story.

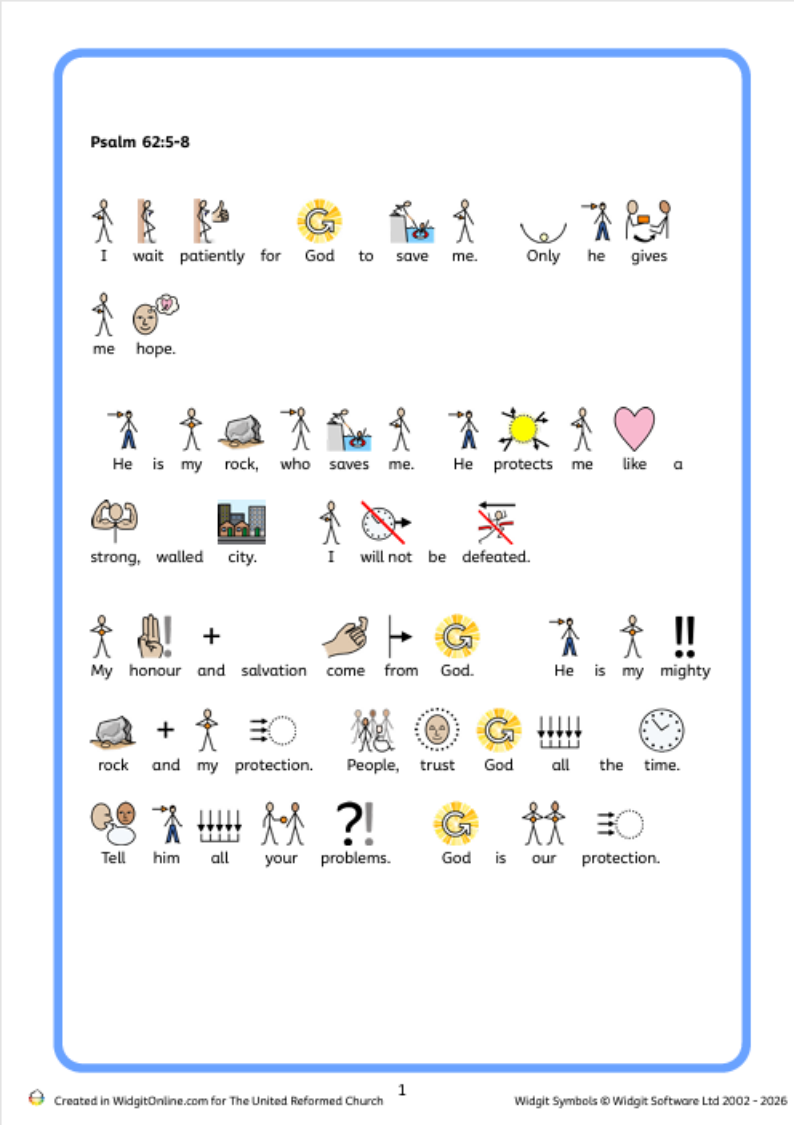
- I wonder what might each character be hoping for?
- I wonder if you are hoping for anything today?

For older children

Using the nativity scene can they re-tell the story of Jesus birth.

And/or

Using the Widgit A4 laminated sheet read the passage and identify the images for hope and the image for God think about how God brings us hope.



I wonder which character had the biggest hope?

I wonder what you hope for this week?

Prayers for the table

Under 5's

Big reach up high! *(Stretch arms up as high as they can go)*
Thank you, God, for loving me!

Stretch arms out wide! *(Spread arms wide to the sides)*
Your hope and love can lift us all!

Big smile on your face! *(Point to a big smile)*
Your live in your hope.

Amen! *(Clap hands together)*

Reach up high! *(Stretch arms up as high as they can go)*
Thank you, God, for loving me!
Stretch arms out wide! *(Spread arms wide to the sides)*
Your hope and love can lift us all!
Big smile on your face! *(Point to a big smile)*
Your live in your hope.
Amen! *(Clap hands together)*

Lord, God of hope,
We come to you as we are, helpless without you.
Help us to rest in you, pinning our hopes on you rather than on the things of this world.
We pray for those who are worried about their future, who feel uncertain, anxious or alone.
When we feel discouraged, fill us with hope, when we don't know which way to turn,
help us to trust in you.
Lord, help us to be people who bring hope to others – listening to them, believing in them, encouraging them and walking alongside them.
May our churches and communities be places where all can find welcome, belonging and hope.
God of hope, help us to rest in you and place our future in your hands.
Amen.

Lord, God of hope,
We come to you as we are, helpless without you.
Help us to rest in you, pinning our hopes on you rather than on the things of this world.
We pray for those who are worried about their future, who feel uncertain, anxious or alone.
When we feel discouraged, fill us with hope, when we don't know which way to turn, help us to trust in you.
Lord, help us to be people who bring hope to others – listening to them, believing in them, encouraging them and walking alongside them.
May our churches and communities be places where all can find welcome, belonging and hope.
God of hope, help us to rest in you and place our future in your hands.

Amen.

PRAYER STATION THREE



Waiting in Peace, Psalm 4 v 8 EasyEnglish Bible Translation

8 I will lie down and I will sleep in peace.
You, Lord, are the one who takes care of me,
and you keep me safe.

EasyEnglish Bible Copyright © MissionAssist 2019 - Charitable Incorporated Organisation 1162807. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

You will need:

- A Bible open at the passage
- the Bible text central on A4 paper, enough for each participant
- if using a copy of the passage with Widgit imagery enough, for each participant who would find the imagery useful
- pillows and/or cushions
- basket
- small slips of paper and pens
- gentle background music
- if possible, a small indoor tent/sensory den or sheets to create a den. Battery powered fairy lights
- if possible, an image of 'Watchers in the Night' by Thomas Blackshear II – (for viewing purposes only - bit.ly/Watchersinthenight)

Set up the tent and place the cushions and pillows inside. String the fairy lights along the top inside to look like stars. Place some questions around the den that people can reflect upon if they wish –

- What does it mean to me to sleep peacefully?
- In what ways can I trust God to take care of my worries?
- How does it feel to know that God cares for me and keeps me safe?

Have music playing quietly within the den.

Place a small bin/basket outside the entrance to the den. On a table next to the den, have a copy of the Bible passage, slips of paper and pens set out.

What you do:

Invite people to read the Bible passage a couple of times.

Ask them to write or draw an anxiety, thought, or anything that keeps them from sleeping well on a slip of paper.

When they are ready, scrunch the paper up and throw it into the bin to the entrance of the den, to symbolise them giving it to God. Go into the den and lay on the cushions. In the den, they can reflect on the scripture, the questions or just be in the presence of God.

Alternatives

If you are unable to create a den, place this prayer station in the corner of a room. Lay cushions and pillows in the corner and invite people to sit on them.

If you have people with mobility issues, place some cushions at table height and invite them to hold the cushions, or lay their head against them, as they reflect upon the scripture and questions.

Under 5's
Invite young children to draw a small picture to God. Have a small box that they can place their drawings into. Encourage them to snuggle amongst the cushions. You can use wondering questions with them –

- I wonder what makes you feel loved and special?
- I wonder how God makes you feel special?

For an alternative prayer with them, get them to squeeze a cushion really tightly and say, "thank you God for caring for me when I sleep", let go of the cushion "and when I'm awake!"

PRAYER STATION FOUR



Waiting in Joy Psalm 30 v 5 and 11 – 12 New Living Translation

Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.
Lord, You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing.
You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy,
that I might sing praises to you and not be silent.
O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever!

Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

You will need:

- the Bible passage either on a sheet of paper or a bible with it marked out
- an instruction sheet as below which includes the wondering questions
- water soluble pens
- paper (watercolour paper is best)
- plates
- bowl of salted water
- bookmark shaped blank card

What you do:

Begin by reading Psalm 30 v 5 and 11 – 12.

Advent can be a difficult time. We may be feeling sad even though we are surrounded by the excitement and joy of Christmas.

- What are the things that you are feeling sad about at the moment?
- What does this passage say to you in your sadness?

This passage reminds us that God is with us in the times of sadness and crying, we are not alone.

It also reminds us that everything is for a time, the passage promises us that there will come a time when our joy is restored.

In the meantime, we are encouraged to sing to God, to not be silent and to stay close to God.

As you think about the things that you feel sad about, write them on the paper and using one finger drop salted water onto the words (put the paper on a plate). You might want to speak the words to God, giving them in prayer.

See how the words merge and begin to blend and even disappear.
Now take a bookmark and create a design full of colour to remind you of the psalm's promise, take this bookmark with you when you move on.

Prayer

Lord, we pray for those who find this time of year difficult
Thank you that you are with us always, in our sadness and in our sorrow
As we prepare to remember how you came into our world as one of us, we are reminded that you felt sadness and knew struggles.

Keep us near to you this advent, help us to give you the things that make us sad
Give us strength to wait for Joy to come
Amen

Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too. If you are to use the modern parable, consider buying a copy or borrowing it from the library so children see the actual book and can explore the illustrations more (and support the author).



Waiting is not easy by Mo Williams
Published by Hyperion Books for Children in 1900. ISBN 10 – 9781423199571

Gerald and Piggie are best friends. Piggie has a special surprise for Gerald, but they have to wait.....and wait.....and wait for it to arrive.

People were waiting for the birth of Jesus. For many, it was a very long wait. I wonder if they ever thought it would never happen. I wonder if they got frustrated. After waiting for so long, how do you think they felt when Jesus was finally born?

What's in the box (for under fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing, "What's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

- Each prayer station has something for little ones but if you still wanted to offer a box then fill it with various items which could be linked to prayer such as a telephone to chat to God, a plaster for when we ask God to help us, a teddy for when we ask God for love and comfort, a party blower for when we thank God for the fun in our lives and a picture of family for when we ask God to take care of those we love.

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Refer to Explore section.

Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

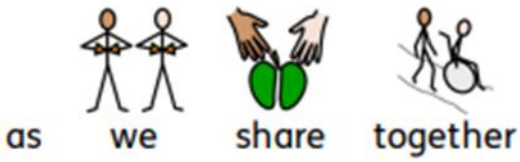
- Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to tell you how they prefer to pray to God.
- During this week of Advent, why not try to engage with a daily Advent devotional, the URC have a daily devotional and will feature Advent throughout December or you could try using this website for inspiration. **https://missiontogether.org.uk/digital-advent-calendar/**

We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **Advent in the style of creative prayer** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing **sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk**
Please join the Faith Adventures Facebook Group **bit.ly/FACT_FB**
Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Advent in the style of reflective story telling**

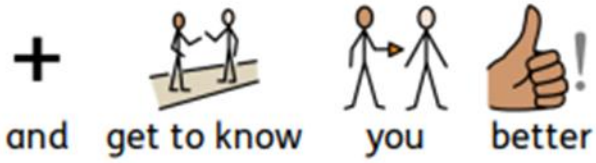

Jesus our friend,

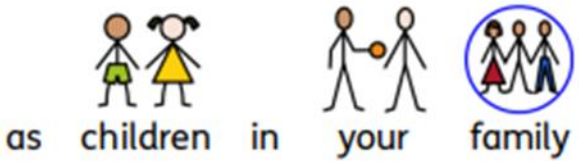

be with us today


as we share together


pray together


play together


and get to know you better


as children in your family


Amen


Right middle finger touches centre of other palm, repeat with left hand



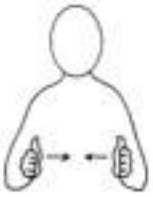

Alternate hands back and forth











The Lord's Prayer















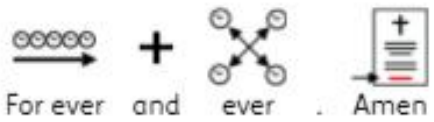




Illustration by lambsongs.co.nz via freebibleimages.com



