



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: Luke 1: 44-46

Theme: Joyful

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

Welcome to week 3 of Advent! The candle we light this week is a candle of joy – so joy is this week's theme, too.

'Joy' is a word that might be new to some of your group. We often talk about 'happy' or 'glad' but joy is an old-fashioned word and it means so much more than happy! It means unbridled delight!

When Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, Elizabeth (who is pregnant with Jesus' cousin, who will become known as John the Baptist) tells Mary that the child in her womb 'jumped with joy'. It is Elizabeth's unborn child that is the first to realise that something wonderful was going on.

We must always remember, while we work with children, not to be blind to their revelations!



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 – Christmas mix

You will need:

- chairs
- four Christmas items

Invite everyone to sit in a circle, either on the floor or on chairs. Remove a chair from the circle (if on the floor, have a child come and sit/stand in the middle while setting up and close the space).

Choose 3-4 items that are related to Christmas (e.g. lights, tree, presents, bells) and assign one of the items to each player.



The person in the middle of the circle shouts out one of the Christmas items. All the players with that Christmas name must jump and find a new seat (or space) in the circle. The person in the middle of the circle must also try to find a seat.

The person left without a seat (space) becomes the new caller.

After a few goes, introduce "Christmas Mix". When this is called, everyone must jump and find a new seat (space).

Quieter game - Sounds of Christmas

You will need:

- tray
- Christmas items that make a sound such as bells, crackers, wrapping paper, sticky tape (to wrap the presents), coconuts for reindeer hoof beats etc.
- tea towel

Before playing the game prepare a tray with items on it that relate to Christmas sounds. Cover the tray or keep it hidden behind something.

Divide everyone into teams. Play the sound and have them write down what they think it is. Remind them to whisper quietly as other teams may hear what the answer is. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

Variations for this game – have one person from each team come forward and see how many they can guess on their own; have all the group together and shout out what they think it is.

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

For this story we recommend using the **International Children's Bible**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%201:44-46&version=ICB>

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: The story of Jesus by Saddleback Kids

<https://youtu.be/v3656G6tWul?si=HQIm2sZUkzBOsgIL>

Five to eights: Rhyming Bible by Hamilton old

<https://youtu.be/sHhWztOPWxk?si=RU3dQEVpza4-xLH3>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: Jump for Joy by Dan Lueders

<https://youtu.be/LkX0AgtV99E?si=8LS51HKMYy1aVb7h>

Five to eights: Joy by North kids

https://youtu.be/CBYjEKa1k1s?si=DJz2Z1vr4K_5K62h



Explore – ways into the theme

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

A new way to explore the theme

Hot seating

Hot seating is a drama game, which helps a group to explore what characters in a story might be thinking or feeling. It can also be used to better understand how someone in a story might answer questions that haven't been asked directly. Your group could decide to focus on Mary or use the technique to explore the story from Mary *and* Elizabeth's perspectives.

- Ask your group to sit in a circle, then place an empty chair in the middle of the circle.
- Read the bible passage to the group.
- Explain that the chair in the middle of the circle is for Mary (or Elizabeth). Whoever sits in the chair will answer questions as Mary – not as herself.
- Those sitting in the circle can raise their hand to ask 'Mary' a question. A leader can model sitting in the hot seat first, to allow the group to feel more confident if they have never taken part in hot seating before.
- After one or two questions, thank 'Mary' and show them back to their seat; another child can have a turn at being Mary.

Respecting responses

It is important to create a space where the children listen to each other and respect each other's answers. Let them know that it is ok to not know how Mary would respond – or to give a slightly different answer to a question than somebody else. It is also important to explain that the chair represents the character – everyone can have a turn at pretending to be Mary – you don't have to be the same age or gender as the character being questioned.

Leaders could prepare a few questions for the first 'Mary' to help get ideas flowing.

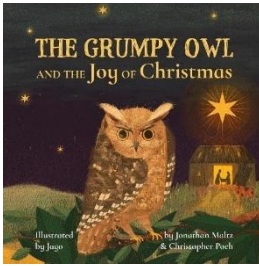
Younger groups

For younger groups, ask simple questions. You could provide emotion flash cards – see handout – so that the child in the centre of the circle could choose how they think Mary felt at different parts of the story.

After you have finished exploring, remove the chair from the centre of the circle as a sign that the game has finished. Chat with your group – did they find it interesting? Are there any other questions they would have liked to have asked? If they could meet any bible character who would it be?

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).



The Grumpy Owl and the Joy of Christmas by Jonathn Maltz and Christopher Poch – September 2025 – Church House Publishing.

<https://youtu.be/KdEleQSxrs0?si=UiVqmoPAqBfvnULR> by Stopsley Baptist Church.

The Owl was feeling very grumpy. Every time he was interrupted he became grumpier and grumpier, but that soon turned to joy when he realised that the thing which had been interrupting him was the most

joyful thing ever!

When did your grumpiness last turn to Joy?

Talking together: How might we talk about the Bible story together?

- What is the difference between joy and happiness?
- Is all joy from God?
- Who do you share God news with?

Wondering reflect on the theme

- I wonder what tests your patience?
- I wonder what makes you jump for joy?
- I wonder if you've ever felt full of peace?
- I wonder if you can share joy?

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.

This week's box could include:

- Advent wreath- show the children an Advent wreath and explain that we are week 3 of Advent. Maybe light the candle, or show them the lit candle in church.
- A part of a nativity scene (added to each week to create it) – each week build a part of the nativity scene. This week add in Mary and Joseph.
- A party popper – pull the party popper and talk about when we use them, and that they can represent the joy that Mary felt knowing her baby was so special.
- A baby doll – place the baby in front of the children and talk about the joy Jesus has brought to the world.
- A happy face emoji image – ask the children what makes them feel really happy.
- Heart – this heart represents God's hope for the world. At Christmas time God sent a baby to bring joy to the world. The baby was called Jesus.
- A tactile cross of wood or fabric (A cross shape reminds us of Jesus. Jesus/God loves us and it's always in the box because Jesus/God always loves us!)
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (eg stones, felt, twigs etc)



Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Prayerful activity – Joy springs

You will need:

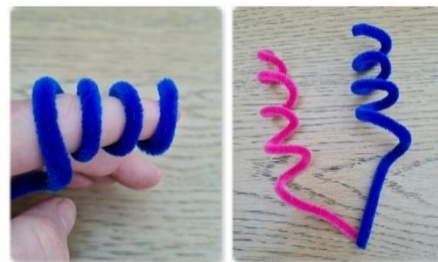
- pipecleaners

What you do:

Wind a pipe cleaner around your finger to make a spring.

Think about all the things that make you bubble with a deep-down joy; it might be an event, a person or a place.

Thank God for those things and ask that you will feel that deep down joy each day.



Spoken prayer

Light the candle, blow it out once the flame burns down to the word Joy.

Hold a Christmas cracker in your hand as you start the prayer.

Heavenly Father,

Hold the Christmas cracker - we are filled with Joy as the excitement of the Christmas season is starting. Yet just as with this cracker,

Pull cracker - the bang and the spark could be frightening. We pray for all those who are frightened and ask that they could know your peace.

Hold the joke - Lord the prophets in the Old Testament talked of your coming, but just as with some jokes, they did not all understand. We now know that you are the answer, you are the Prince of Peace.

Hold the Hat – Lord you are the King of Kings, help us to allow you to be King of our lives.

Hold the Gift – The Wise Men bought you gifts, help us to know that you are the best gift of all.

Pull a cracker on the Amen - Amen.

Responding together - Crackers

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond.

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response.



However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

You will need:

- cardboard kitchen roll inner core tube
- patterned paper
- narrow ribbon for each cracker
- double-sided tape
- small rectangle of card
- some favourite jokes, treats, bible verses, hats



What you do:

Cut the kitchen roll inner core tube in half, this will do two crackers. Put a strip of double-sided tape on the tube to fix the paper in place.

Roll a sheet of patterned paper around the tube. Trim away excess paper but leave an overlap. Fix with the double-sided tape

Fill open end of cracker with a favourite joke, treat, bible verse, and if you have any hats from old crackers.

Carefully tie the ends with ribbon.

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:

- Not everyone feels joyful, see if you can help cheer someone up this week who seems sad or low.
- When have you experienced the biggest amount of joy?

We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **Elizabeth's joy** 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 **God's love**

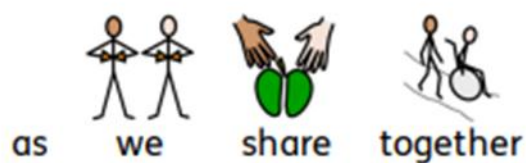




Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



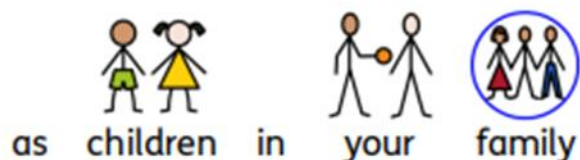
pray together



play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen



Alternate hands back and forth





The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our sins As we forgive those who sin against us

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory

For ever and ever . Amen





