



Faith Adventures for Children Together



*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:
<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

Galatians 4:4 God's plan comes together

Theme: It's Christmas! – Jesus is born – Halleluia!

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

This session is full of ways to celebrate and explore the birth of Jesus. You might use it at Christmas or perhaps some other time during Advent. With this in mind, we offer a mix of celebration as well as focusing on exploring the story.

The passage we have chosen (especially in the version we have recommended) reminds us that a special baby is born. Heaven has come to earth. Jesus is human as well as divine (God). Let's celebrate and wonder again at this miracle.

Happy Christmas to you all from the writing group for FACT and FAYR.

Together

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

In-person game – Name the baby.

You will need: picture quiz (see below) or alternatively photos of your team and their mums

A sit down picture quiz matching the baby animal to the correct name: for example, match the picture of the baby horse to the word foal. There are many versions to print online.

Here's one example: <https://www.pinterest.co.kr/pin/315674255111224154/>

You could link this to the fact that Mary was told that her baby would be called Jesus.

Alternatively, challenge the group to match the baby pictures of team members or of other familiar people in the church to pictures of their mums. I wonder whether Jesus looked like his mum at all?

Alternative game – Find the full story

A run around game to bring the nativity together again.

You will need: one or two nativity sets or pictures of different people in the nativity set.

Hide the nativity sets around the room or church, no clues needed. The group has a set amount of time simply to find all the pieces and bring them together to create a nativity scene. It would work well with two or more teams, all searching for different nativity sets. They would need to find the right shepherd for the right set. You could have a rule that if they find something from the others group's set, they get to re-hide it somewhere else.



Experience

For this story we recommend using the EasyEnglish Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+4%3A4&version=EASY>

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: story from Nicola <https://youtu.be/fiEx9rBK5VA?si=2939V7IVv8bxk8t>

Over fives: The Christmas Story – J John <https://youtu.be/Dbp24wZQa3Y?si=kfDPuHt5FZMijck4>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: Away in a Manger – Makaton

<https://youtu.be/gMfyGbt43rM?si=FZo9KNZxV9gX8RqC>

Five to elevens It was on a starry night – with Makaton – Singing Hands:

<https://youtu.be/MCHL2t7xxus?feature=shared>

Calypto carol – with Makaton – Singing Hands: <https://youtu.be/VerE5iG44Bk?feature=shared>

Explore

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

A new way to explore the passage

You will need:

A nativity set

Christmas crackers

Small christmas tree

Tinsel

Star

Gift

Something to represent christmas food

A father christmas

Any other christmas items you may have

Place the nativity set on the table bringing everyone's attention to how Christmas is the celebration of Jesus birth. Perhaps comment on how wonderful the nativity is.

Then start to go through the other christmas items you have with you. As you discuss each one (briefly) and how they relate to christmas, place them in front of the nativity. By the time you have finished discussing the items the nativity should be hidden.

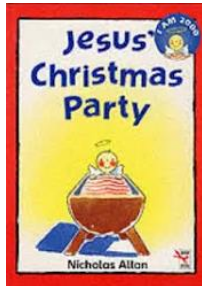
Exclaim, 'oh dear – look what's happened??' Give time for anyone else to spot what the problem is.

Once they have realised/ been shown how the nativity has been covered up, move the christmas items to either side and behind the nativity explaining that it's fine to enjoy these things at Christmas. God wants us to have fun and celebrate but we musn't lose sight of the real reason for Christmas, that God came to earth in the form of Jesus to be our friend and our saviour.



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.



'Jesus's Christmas Party' by Nicholas Allen

Read by Sotires n Stuff: https://youtu.be/_XxH0M-DPNA?si=hOpugjWLUUsAWtgeN

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

- I wonder how God decided when and where Jesus should be born – why was the time right?
- I wonder what it might have been like for Jesus growing up as a child? Did he know he was God's son then?
- I wonder if Mary and Joseph celebrated Jesus's birthday every year? I wonder how they might have celebrated if they did?
- I wonder how things would be different if Jesus hadn't been born at all?
- What parts of Christmas celebrations are because of Jesus and what parts are for other reasons?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder what's the most special part of Christmas for you?
- I wonder what's your favourite bit of the whole Christmas story?

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). You could tap the top of the box twice after the word 'box'. 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:

- A nativity set- put the nativity set together and talk about the different characters in it
- A party hat- Christmas is a time of celebration. I wonder what we are celebrating?
- A birthday card- Jesus is born, we are celebrating his birthday. I wonder how Jesus celebrated his birthday?
- A heart- God loves us and sent Jesus to show us his love
- A baby doll- talk about Jesus coming as a human baby to share God's love with 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

Praying together: how can you involve the children actively in prayer?

Deconstructing the Christmas scene

Set up a nativity set.

Slowly take away each part of the nativity scene:

Begin with the animals and thank God for our wonderful creation, asking help as we care for it.

Then remove the shepherds and pray for the people who share good news with us and tell us about Jesus.

Take away the kings/wise men and pray for countries far away from our homes.

Take away Mary and Joseph and pray for the people who care for us.

Finally, pray for all to hear the news of Jesus being born for us all and loving us all equally.



Spoken prayer

Candle 4

Dear God,
 This candle we light
 is for Jesus, Your precious Son,
 tiny and fragile, born among us.
 Help us to show the love
 that Jesus shines into the world
 As we come to the place of your birth
 in wonder and in joy
 may our hearts be filled with Love .
 Amen



Responding together

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. <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

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.

New Baby cards

At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus' birthday. But Jesus wasn't the only baby born on Christmas day – all over the world other babies were born as well – we just don't know about them!

Can you think of some other famous people who were born on Christmas day? The internet can certainly help you out.



And, this Christmas, there will be children born too. There might even be some born in your local hospital. Wouldn't it be nice if their parents were able to give them a 'Happy Christmas Birthday Card' from you?

Why not make some yourselves and deliver them to your local hospital for the nurses and staff on the maternity ward to give to the babies that are born at Christmas.

If you're short of ideas, you can look at the cards that were designed by children just like you for the United Reformed Church. You can see some of their designs at www.urcshop.co.uk/pack-of-12-birthday-cards-designed-by-children/



Crackers



You will need:

- Toilet roll tubes cut in half to make two shorter tubes
- A4 sized pieces of coloured tissue paper
- Sweets to go inside the cracker
- Small gift, paper crown, joke (optional)
- Paper to write verse on or have it pre-printed
- Curly wrapping ribbon

What you do:

Write or print out the verse from Galatians on a piece of paper. Put it into the toilet roll tube, together with a sweet and any other items you want to include. Having cut the tube in half will help it pull apart when you come to pull the cracker with a friend.

Cut zig zags out on both short ends of the A4 piece of wrapping paper or tissue paper to make the frills at the ends of the cracker. Roll the filled toilet roll tube in the tissue paper with the zig zags at each end.

Tie each end next to the tube with some curly wrapping ribbon.

You could also decorate the outside with some sticky stars or other decorations if you are using plain tissue paper.

We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of Christmas with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk

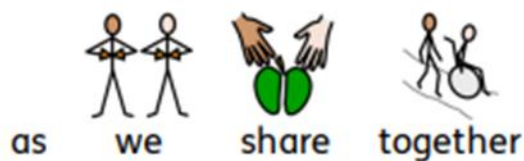
Why not have a look at next week's resource on **John 1**



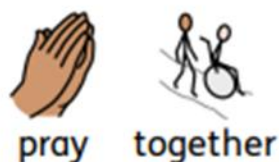
Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



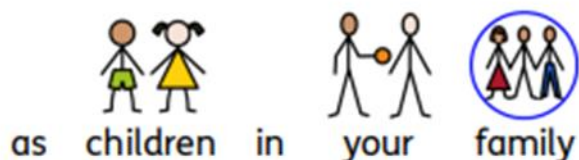
pray together



play together



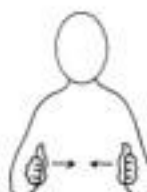
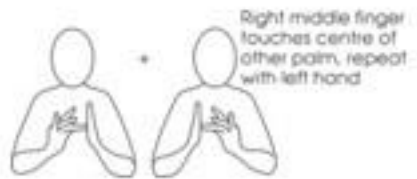
and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen



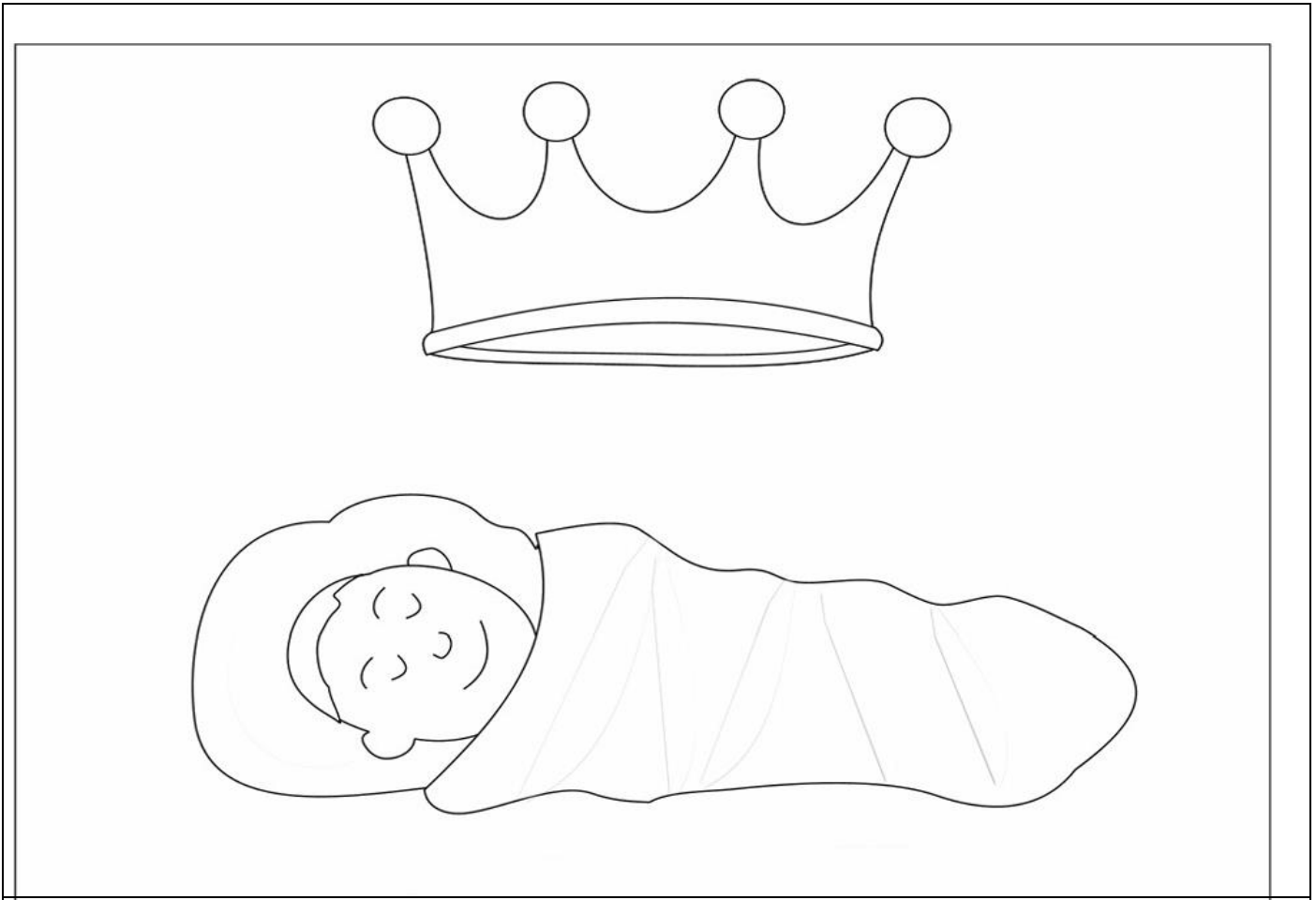


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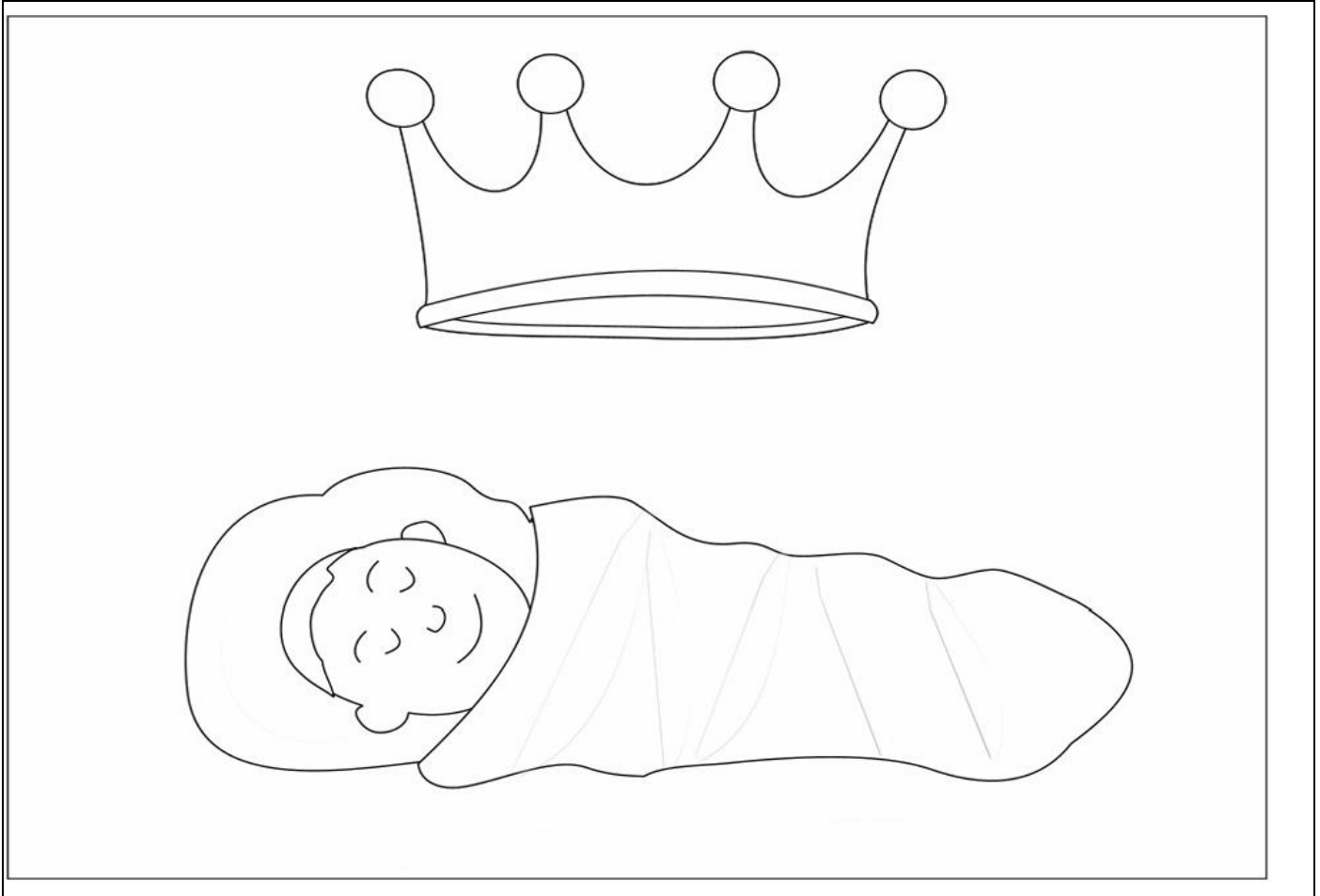




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