



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>

3 John 1: 5-12

Theme: The Church community as an influence in the world

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

3 John is a pastoral letter, sent to encourage a church community. Most people believe that the same person wrote the previous two letters, and also wrote John's gospel. It is written from someone who is a church leader, directly to Gaius rather than the whole church, celebrating his reputation for offering hospitality. The letter continues to discuss two individuals who have had very different types of influence on church communities: one good, the other bad.

This week's session will explore how churches can be an influence on the communities in which they are based. There will be an opportunity to consider the influence that churches can have, reflect on the influence your individual church has and explore the importance of churches looking outwards.

Whilst considering church influence, it will be important to allow space to consider positive and negative influences. However, it will be vital that the space offers a chance for the children and young people to raise issues that they are already aware of, rather than providing lots of negative examples which may be new to them. Some members of the group may also need extra time to discuss the issues and ask additional questions. Ensuring there is a balance within the discussion, of positive and negative influences, will be helpful. Discussions could include local church influence, as well as national and global examples.



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

Wink murder (with a twist)

This game plays with the idea of your actions and words influencing people positively and negatively.

Play the original game first. Everyone sits in a circle, a detective is chosen and sent outside whilst you choose a murderer. Bring the detective back in, they stand in the middle of the circle and try to guess who the murderer is (three guesses). The murderer takes people out one by one, by winking at them.

Next play it again but this time when the influencer (murderer) winks at you, something positive will happen. Your group could decide what this is. For example, if you are winked at, you could come to the middle and take a small sweet, or raise your hands and shout Yee haw, or stand up and turn round and sit down again.



Alternative game

This game plays with the idea of how we build our communities/tribes with our influence.

The group will run around the room.

Choose two/three influencers. Their job is to increase their following.

They try to tag people running around, if you are tagged you join the influencer, creating a long line behind them, holding each other's waists.

Who can collect the most people?

Experience

For this story we recommend using the EasyEnglish Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=3+john+1%3A+5-12&version=EASY>

We couldn't find any child friendly version of the passage, but here are videos that compliment and explain the ideas of the passage and the themes of this session.

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: What is the Church? By Lifekids.

<https://youtu.be/rms6KePjZ8?si=6542jliG5q7KiYcw>

Over fives: Go and make disciples (what church can look like) by Jesusready

https://youtu.be/GNQ-I_N07oc?si=RU9rZ7Kljiya6nMp

Songs to support the story

Under fives: It starts with me by Mrs Ford

https://youtu.be/6_oXIPY4wPk?si=-REqs5yAxuWHzel_

Five to elevens: God's love is big by Allstars kids club

<https://youtu.be/ss-qCvdMAmc?si=45NZ6REsrarNF6ZG>

Explore

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

A new way to explore the passage

Make sure the Bible verse is written out/ printed onto a large sheet of paper, preferably the size of the paper on a flip chart.

Read the verses together one at a time and decide which are the positive effects on the community - highlight them. (The children could help with the highlighting.)

Then have a look at your own church – it may be good to have a separate piece of paper for this and make notes of all the children can think of that the Church does for and in the community.

For those who like something creative and tactile, a map of the community could be available for them to colour in/ circle/ place stickers on places that are impacted in the community by the church.



Explore whether the notes you have made on your church mirror any of the positive effects from the Bible verse.

Can you identify any gaps? What could the church/ you/ your group to help fill that gap?

Perhaps your Pastor/ minister or someone from the leadership team could be invited along to the group and talk about the vision of the church for the community/ outreach plan and answer any questions the children may have.

This website showcases ordinary christians making an impact in the community in their everyday lives – how they reflect the church.

<https://youtu.be/SyMMfyy3FDE?si=dNOnYH8WWBtVVaYu>

Keep the notes you have made as they may be something you would like to come back to on another occasion to see how the church has grown and what impact they have made as a reflection of the church.

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.



A non-fiction book about someone who had an unexpected influence on scientists.

Little People Big Dreams – Mary Anning read by Sheralle

<https://youtu.be/LFTiI0lwRuY?si=vcC4RcZvYIDYsAxx>

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

- The Bible passage highlights some positive and negative effects that the church can have on the community, what are they?
- What was John hoping would come from his letter?
- If Jesus was going to visit your church tomorrow what would he find?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder what reputation you have? And what reputation your Church or group have?
- I wonder what it feels like when someone says something positive about you? Negative about you?
- I wonder who you'd share/ tell God's love with/ to?

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:

- Building blocks and people (to create a building with people)
- A mirror (to discuss what is special about us and that God made us special to help others)
- A kitchen set (come and have a nice cup of tea? It's nice to see you! Welcome! Talk about sharing and being kind)
- 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

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

Church Model Prayers

Create a church shape that your group can add their own prayers to. Younger children may need help writing their ideas or prefer to draw pictures to represent their prayers. You could make your prayer model in a number of different ways:



- Junk modelling – use clean boxes and other junk modelling materials to create a building shape similar to your church. Sit in a circle around the model and take turns to add prayers for your church and community onto the model.
- Church outline – Draw a simple church outline on a large piece of paper in the middle of your group. Take turns to add words or picture prayers to the outline.
- 3D model – Using a printed out net (such as; [Five Church Trail_3D Church Model.pdf](#)), create a 3D model in pairs or as a whole group. Add prayers for your church, to the model.

Spoken prayer

Stand in a circle, looking inwards

Thank you, God, for our friends in our church family,
for our friends at school and our families at home.
Thank you for loving us.

Still standing in a circle but looking outwards

Help us to let others know how much you love them.
Help us look out into our community
and see how we can make a difference.
Thank you for loving everyone.

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.

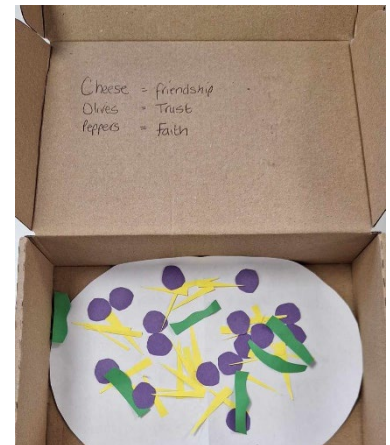
Ideal church

Today's session has all been about exploring what sort of a positive impact the church could have in the community. We as people make up the church so our thoughts and ideas count.

You will need:

- Small pizza boxes or something to represent them
- Pens
- Circle paper for the base of the pizza
- Paper toppings

Either create some paper toppings for the pizzas (some toppings could be cheese/ peppers/ ham/ pineapple/ tomato puree) or encourage the children do design their own.



The aim is by the end of the activity each child will have a pizza covered in the attributes that they think makes up a church that can have a positive effect on the community. This isn't about telling them what attributes they should have but encouraging them to come up with their own ideas. There are no right or wrong answers.

As the children chose a topping discuss what attribute they would consider it to and why. For instance, one child may chose tomato puree and say it stands for love because it's covering over the pizza and the church needs to cover people in love.

Edible church

Simply enjoy making an individual pizza to eat together.

You may have made the pizza craft; this is an opportunity to make one to actually eat.

Provide the ingredients to make the pizzas, to link to the passage, you might like to add a label to each topping bowl (showing a healthy church attribute) for example:

Label the cheese with the people of God, label the tomato with God's love and grace, label the smaller toppings with attributes like love, hospitality, care.

As the group make their pizzas, you will hear them saying I'm going to add some love etc.

Cook the pizzas and enjoy together.



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:

- As you get ready each morning for the day ahead ask God to help you to be a good influence on those around you, you may even feel brave enough to talk about God.
 - Talk to someone older or younger than you and ask them to tell you about someone in the Church who has had an influence in their life.
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We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **3 John 1** with us.

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

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

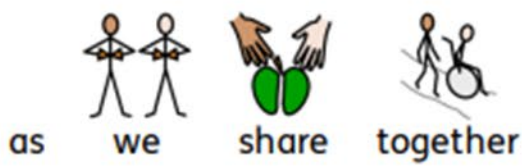




Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



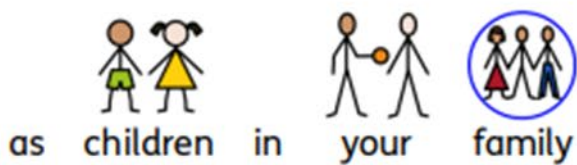
pray together



play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen

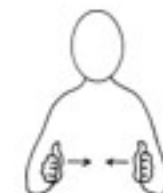




Illustration by lambsongs.co.nz via freebibleimages.com Jill Kemp and Richard Gunther



