



Faith Adventures Youth Resource

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

Embedded in Faith Adventures: Children Together, this youth resource is intergenerational in nature and designed to foster God-connection in church, home 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/How-To-FAYR

Title: Luke 1: 44-55

Theme: Joyful singing

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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.

In response, Mary tells Elizabeth that she (Mary) is 'not important'. God obviously thought that Mary was very important – why do you think Mary said she was not important?

The first three verses of Mary's prayer explains a little bit about how she sees her relationship with God, whilst the following verses tell of Mary's understanding of God's relationship with the world

and, in particular, God's desire for justice. It is some of these justice themes that the young people will be exploring.

Together – prayer and games

Let's start our time with God and each other well

Use this opening prayer or encourage young people to open the session with a prayer of their own.

All mighty God,

Be with us as we learn more about you through stories and people in the Bible.

Help us to walk in your way and follow your path.

Be with us as we make decisions that affect our lives, and the lives of those around us.

Amen

Alternatively, you may join with the widget prayer found in the Faith Adventures: Children together or else the Lord's prayer found at the end of this session.

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

This link takes you to Luke 1: 44-55 in International Children's Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%201%3A44-55&version=ICB>

Research different versions of this reading on www.biblegateway.com

Recommended versions to try are NRSV, Easy-to-read, The Message, NIRV

⁴⁴ When I heard your voice, the baby inside me jumped with joy. ⁴⁵ You are blessed because you believed what the Lord said to you would really happen."

Mary Praises God

⁴⁶ Then Mary said, "My soul praises the Lord;

⁴⁷ my heart is happy because God is my Savior.

⁴⁸ I am not important, but God has shown his care for me, his servant girl.

From now on, all people will say that I am blessed,

⁴⁹ because the Powerful One has done great things for me.

His name is holy.

⁵⁰ God will always give mercy

to those who worship him.

⁵¹ God's arm is strong.

He scatters the people who are proud
and think great things about themselves.

⁵² God brings down rulers from their thrones,

and he raises up the humble.

⁵³ God fills the hungry with good things,

but he sends the rich away with nothing.

⁵⁴ God has helped his people Israel who serve him.

He gave them his mercy.

⁵⁵ God has done what he promised to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his children forever."

Watch: Magnificat <https://youtu.be/Z6nAsESYPiY?si=0gPO5F9bgWYSItG4> by tranceseraph although this is almost 5 minutes long, the relevant part is between 1:05 – 3:30.

Listen to or read Mary's song known as The Magnificat.

Questions for discussion:

Mary was young when she accepted God's request of her, she was given a great gift from God?

- I wonder how she felt?
- I wonder what her reasons were for travelling (about 150km) to visit Elizabeth?

The Magnificat is a prayer from a faith filled young woman, aware of her lowly status and conscious of her limitations. She thanks God for using her.

- I wonder if we are aware of our limitations and whether we are ready to be used by God?

Explore

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

A new way to explore the theme

This is a new way to explore the Bible passage and the theme for this week.

Alternatively, you may wish to use the explore section from this week's Faith Adventures: Children Together to guide your exploration of the theme this week.

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 both Mary *and* Elizabeth's perspectives. A third option is to focus on verses 50 to 55 in the Bible passage exploring what it means to feel God's mercy, to see proud people scattered, to break down rulers from their thrones, to fill the hungry with good things. These issues can be explored from their own perspective, from another person such as someone older or younger than them, from God's perspective or rulers of this country. The chair stays empty so people can choose whether to sit on it, when they do they say who they are (Mary, Elizabeth, someone older, younger, different gender, God, etc) Those sitting in the circle can raise their hand to ask a question. A leader can model sitting in the hot seat first if appropriate, to allow the group to feel more confident if they have never taken part in hot seating before. Ensure each person takes a brief turn to allow everyone to have a turn, perhaps allowing one or two questions per person.

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.

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

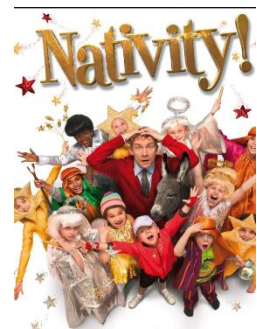
This section includes references to TV programmes, films, books, TED talks, TikTok etc aimed at this age group that will have been widely seen, or where a clip is available to use as a stimulus for discussion. You may also enjoy the picture book recommended for Faith Adventures: Children Together and explore the relevance of the story to the theme of the session in more depth – young people and adults are often well tuned in to the deeper meanings in materials aimed at younger people and the authors are often very aware of the adults reading the books to or with younger ones.

The Nativity by Nature relax

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7voair>

Watch the end scene from The Nativity 1:25:00 to 1:45:15. Gordon Shakespeare is trying to stop the performance, when Hollywood appears. They all come together in forgiveness and love to end the show well, full of joy.

- What steals your joy at this time of year?
- How can you bring joy into other people's experience of Advent and Christmas?



Group discussion

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

Personal reflection

- What is the difference between being joyful and happy?
- I wonder what saps your joy?
- I wonder if you can feel joy when things are not going well?

Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Praying together

Prayer Respond to the theme by writing or saying a short prayer. Alternatively use the creative prayer from Faith Adventures: Children Together for this session, or use the prayer activity below. Alternatively light a candle and play some music while you listen and talk to God together.

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 – Gaudette Sunday

This is an opportunity for a social justice challenge, some research, craftivism, or a craft or STEM activity. You may have a specific activity chosen but free choice is also an option. Here are some suggestions for this week's theme. Choose whatever will work best for your group.

Today is Gaudette Sunday, celebrated by the Roman Catholic Church, Anglicans, Lutheran and many protestant churches. What can you find out about Gaudette Sunday and The Magnificat (Mary's song). How do they relate to each other? How do they reflect the theme of Joy? Do you see any signs in your churches Advent celebrations that reflect that it is Gaudette Sunday?

Challenge

Discipleship doesn't stop when you walk out of the church door – it is a part of everyday life. Take a challenge with you and try to make it part of your week.

You may think of your own suggestion of what you as an individual or a group might do in the coming week in response to what you have explored today? If not here are some suggestions:

- Use one of the “conversation starter” questions or the question below to talk with someone of a different generation or from a different setting and share your questions, thoughts, insights together. **Mary travelled to visit to Elizabeth perhaps to share her joy, perhaps to seek advice/comfort. Who do you turn to in times of joy or need?**
- Research something suggested by JPIT, Resources (jpit.uk) *Commitment for Life* cforl.co.uk
- Notice those around you this week. Can you see that perhaps people are withdrawn or quieter than usual, are you able to support them?

Thank you for exploring the **Luke** passage with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk or by sharing it on www.bit.ly/FACT_FB

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

Forever and ever . Amen

