



Faith Adventures Youth Resource

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:
<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Faith-Adventures-How-To-FAYR.pdf>

Micah 5:2

Theme: Planning and preparing through Advent for Christmas where you are

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know before we begin?

This month we will be exploring the season of Advent. The writing group have ensured that these sessions will be complimentary to, but different from, the Advent Resource available from the URC Children's and Youth Work Team so, if you have both, you won't need to worry that there are duplicated activities.

Advent is not a time of waiting, it is a time of preparation. Just as parents expecting the imminent birth of a child have lots of things to get ready (buying a cot, maybe, or 'child-proofing' the house) Christians also have to prepare for the birth of Jesus.

The reading tells us that God prepared for the birth of Jesus for a long, long time.

We are also told that Bethlehem, about six miles south of Jerusalem, is 'a little town, among all the many towns in Judah'. At the time of Jesus' birth, it had a population of between 300-1000 people and covered only about 60 acres (about 60 football pitches), but this is the place God chose, and prepared, for the birth of Jesus.

Bethlehem provides proof that small, seemingly insignificant places can have a great and lasting impact on the world.

Bethlehem today is bigger – home to about 25,000 people – and is situated in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It is cut off from Jerusalem, and Israel, by a security wall that makes travel to and from Jerusalem difficult, and often impossible, for residents.

Jewishness is matriarchal – that means that the women are very important to the faith – you can have a non-Jewish father but, if your mother is Jewish, you are considered to be a Jew. Did the Romans understand this? If they did, why did Joseph and Mary have to travel to David's ancestral home rather than Mary's?

As we look at the twin themes of preparation and small things making a big difference, is there something your group, in your church, could do in the run up to Christmas that would have a big impact in the community served by the church? If you follow this through, there is the possibility of achieving the Lundie Award or the Group Award for your group. Details can be found on the URC website (www.urc.org.uk/your-church/family-friendly-church/lundie-memorial-awards/).

Together

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

If used in a mixed-age group, then young people can support younger ones in using the gathering prayer in Faith Adventures: Children Together. If used in a youth group, you could 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

In-person and Alternative game

See this week's Faith Adventures : Children Together for suitable games for this theme.

Experience

Research different versions of this reading on <https://www.biblegateway.com/> Recommended versions to try are NRSV, Easy-to-read, The Message, NIRV

Watch: When Jesus turns up at Christmas – By Julie Nolke
<https://youtu.be/csZNLB3labg?si=NqgWvKZ-8AL28JCy>

Questions for discussion

- What would you do if Jesus turned up at your house unannounced?
- How would you have answered Jesus' questions?
- Is there anything in the video that you could relate to?
- What sorts of things do we do to get ready for Christmas that are hard to explain?
- How do you include Jesus in your getting ready for Christmas?

Explore

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

A new way to explore the theme

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.

God's Big Plan

You will need:

- A picture of the nativity or a nativity set
- A card with Micah's prophecy written on it (Micah 5:2)
- Coloured wool or ribbon
- Spare cards and paper

This week's reading is a prophecy that Micah spoke around 800 years before Jesus was born. A prophecy is a message from God given through a prophet.

Place the prophecy Micah 5:2 at the top of the table/flipchart.

Then right at the bottom of the table/flipchart, place the picture of the nativity Bethlehem scene reminding the group that it was 800 years later that the prophecy came about.

Sit back and look at the large gap in between the prophecy and the nativity scene. I wonder what needed to happen for this prophecy to take place? What other plans did God have to put in place? I wonder how God got from here (the top) to here (the bottom).

As a group work backwards from the nativity to the prophecy, creating words and images that are placed between the two, showing what else needed to happen.

For example: Joseph needed to be with Mary, they needed to be in Bethlehem at the time of the birth (not where they lived in Nazareth), Jesus' earthly family tree needed to lead back to King David. A new star needed to appear when Jesus was born, Wise men needed to see it and follow it for many months and so on.

You may choose to simply map out the elements of the nativity story, or for more of a challenge you may like to look up the dates associated and place it more as a timeline.

However you do it, the task is to explore together all the parts of the nativity scene that needed to be planned in advance by God.

Sit back and look at your finished 'chart'. You may like to use the wondering questions at this point. For example:

- I wonder how long God had been planning this before giving the promise to Micah?
- Are there any older prophecies?
- Is God always putting plans in place?
- I wonder what God is planning at the moment?

You could also wonder about what if one part of these plans hadn't gone through, would the story have looked different?

The birth of Jesus was prophesied long ago, the timeline shows us how God was involved in ensuring the prophecy happened and how prepared people had to be to for it to be. I

wonder if you can think of or find other stories in the Bible where people were not prepared and where God had to step in?

Here is one to help get you started: Matthew 25: 1-13 – Ten bridesmaids.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+25%3A+1-13&version=ICB>

Apply these questions to all stories you find:

- What, in the story, highlights how unprepared the people were?
- How did God step into this story?
- Does this story teach us anything about our daily lives and how we live them?



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.

How to prep a wall for wallpaper – Ace Hardware

https://youtu.be/kqtC-CSycSU?si=_IJEYWMmsCx-1u9w

- What was important to prepare before wallpapering? What could happen if you didn't prepare the wall first?

Talking together: Going deeper

- Why Bethlehem, why that time, why choose someone who wasn't living in Bethlehem but who had ancestors there?
- Do we know anything about Mary's background and ancestry?
- How might you prepare for anything God has planned for you?

Conversation starters

- I wonder what you'd like to be planning or preparing for Christmas this year?
- I wonder if you can take anyone out of the Nativity set without it mattering?

Express

How do we respond to what we've discussed and express our faith personally?

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.

Spoken Prayer

You will need:

- An advent wreath with four candles, this can be as simple as you like. Each week of Advent we will add a prayer for each of the candles. Light the candle as you say the prayer.



Candle 1

Dear God,
This candle we light
is for the prophets
who told of your Kingdom of peace
and the plans you have made for us.
As we journey with Mary and Joseph
In this time of waiting and getting ready
May our hearts be filled with hope .
Amen

Advent Journey prayer spiral

This creative prayer helps us Journey with Mary and Joseph towards Bethlehem and our own advent waiting and getting ready for Jesus.

You will need:

- Air dry clay or plasticine
- A birthday candle or small candle

Take a ball of clay and roll it out into a long sausage shape. Press down with your fingers to flatten it out slightly and shape it into a spiral. Using the candle make 25 indentations deep enough so that the candle will stand freely.



Allow the spiral to air dry.

Each day or weekly move the candle along the spaces and light it. As the candle burns sit quietly and think about a person or place that you want to pray for. Pray that Gods light will shone brightly this advent.

(Adapted from an idea from Flame Creative)

Responding together

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. See Faith Adventures: Children Together for a craft and a STEM activity which may also be appropriate. Choose whatever will work best for your group.



Advent wreath

An advent wreath traditionally counts down the four Sundays of Advent leading up to Christmas. It is a time of planning and preparing for Christmas. Each week one more candle

is lit. I wonder what planning and preparing you are doing this Advent in order to be ready for Christmas? Provide some resources to create your own either from paper and card or with foliage and LED tealights.

Big things from small places

This Bible passage reminds us that God chose the smallest of towns, little Bethlehem, to bring about the birth of Jesus. Out of the smallest came the biggest thing in history, the one who would have greatest impact. This is an opportunity to research your local area to find out if there is anyone who has done something great, or something that has had a great impact. Could you share the story with your church or community to inspire others? This can lead to a conversation about whether we can make a difference too. What could we do as individuals this Christmas that might impact the whole church/town. Let's plan it together and begin to prepare it. Then let's go off and do it, coming back next week to share the stories. For example, the group could make Christmas cards and hand deliver them to the lonely in their neighbourhood.

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:

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- 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. **What times have you felt it helpful to prepare for?**
 - Research something suggested by JPIT, [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](https://resources.jpit.uk) Commitment For Life cforl.co.uk
 - I wonder if you can research and discover which prophecies, from the Bible, are still to be fulfilled? Perhaps there are some which are being fulfilled now? Take note of what you notice about those prophecies which are yet to be fulfilled.
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Thank you for exploring the **Micah** passage with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing children.youth@urc.org.uk or by sharing it on https://bit.ly/FACT_FB