



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>

Luke 2: 8-12 and 15-18 – The Shepherds

Theme: An event for everyone– the shepherds' story

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

Luke

The book of Luke was written by the disciple of the same name. He was a physician and a Gentile, a non-Jew. He writes in a way that seems to want everyone to know that Jesus came for everyone, Jew and Gentile, so it's no surprise that his telling of the birth of Jesus includes the story of the shepherds in quite a lot of detail.

It's a fascinating task to research these shepherds and see who they really were and what farming life was like for them. These were not just normal shepherds; they were specialists in their field (no pun intended). They would have been local people who did seasonal shepherding on the grazing fields around Bethlehem town. Bethlehem means House of Bread, and this is because the fields were used to grow grain. Once the harvest was complete the Shepherds would be invited to bring their flocks to live in the fields, eating the left-over stubs of grain and preparing the field for resowing. The sheep that the shepherds looked after would have been used for sacrifices in the temple.

One of the practices would have included finding the perfect lambs who were spotless, wrapping them in cloths and keeping them in mangers as sacrificial lambs. An image that would have connected with them when the Angel told them to go find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. The Bethlehem shepherds ran to meet the lamb of God in a manger. The Bethlehem shepherds ran to meet the Good Shepherd. It didn't end there, they then went out and told the good news to others, and all those who heard were amazed. This session is an opportunity to



explore the shepherd's story, wonder about farming life then and now and consider how we go and tell this Christmas.

We have used a paraphrase version (the Message) and would suggest you also read it in your usual Bible version to check translation.

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: Rinni - The Shepherd's Song

<https://youtu.be/ZfQTFGdI7Eg?si=Y8gR6wiYmas1-ZLN>

Questions for discussion

Watch the YouTube video and listen to the lyrics of the song.

Rinni, the composer and singer of this song, was thinking about what the shepherds might tell others about what they experienced that first Christmas day. What do you think would be the aspects of their story that you would focus on if you were one of the shepherds? How would you share the news and how would you make people believe what you said?

What emotions do the lyrics and music of this song convey to you?

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.

Alternatively:

These two videos describe and show life as a shepherd in Bethlehem in Bible times. Research what it involves to be a shepherd now and a shepherd then. Who were they? What was their job like? Is it what you expect? What differences and similarities are there? Use that information and the following questions to shape a dramatised retelling of the shepherds story. This could be done in small groups or as one large group. If you are short on people this could be created as a story board. After a time of preparation and practise showcase the stories.

What were the shepherds doing when the angels appeared?
What did *'the shepherds talked it over'* look like?
How did they get to the stable?
What about the sheep?
How did they share the news of Jesus' birth?

Shepherds in the fields in Bethlehem – Dave Stott

https://youtu.be/dslzobZDI_8?si=G9DaKi3LFA8jIRJm

Why tell shepherds about the birth of Christ – Appian media

https://youtu.be/sbIJWeRwseM?si=M2AF1kXc0wb5x_C9

Luke 2: 8-12/ 15-18

How could your group share these stories with the wider church and community?

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.

Our Yorkshire farm – herding in the unsheared sheep – Channel 5

https://youtu.be/Jc_Cmj-_BrU?si=NTMyhfociSTQ1kNA

- Is there anything you find surprising from this clip about being a shepherd?
- What skills did the family need to use to herd the sheep?
- Did you notice how the family communicated news of the sheep to each other and the animals?

Talking together: Going deeper

- I wonder how long the shepherds talked about it before they went to the stable?
- I wonder why God chose these people (the shepherds) to tell?
- How might you have felt if angels came in the night to give you a message? Would you go?
- I wonder what angels really look like?
- I wonder why the first thing the angels said was not to be afraid?
- I wonder whether everyone believed what the shepherds told them? I wonder what they said?
- I wonder how many shepherds there actually were – did they all go at once?
- Would God have looked after their sheep while they were gone? Or an angel, maybe?

Conversation starters

- I wonder if they took their sheep with them? Did the sheep follow? Some Bibles say they left their sheep – do sheep let them do that?
- I wonder who you would tell if you saw something amazing?
- Why these shepherds? Was it significant that these were chosen?

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.

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.

Candle 2 – The Shepherds

Dear God,
 This candle we light
 is for the shepherds
 who heard the message of joy
 that the angels sang.
 Help us to celebrate in the good news of Jesus' birth
 and share that joy with others this Advent time.
 As we journey with the shepherds
 in this time of waiting and getting ready,
 may our hearts be filled with Joy.
 Amen



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.

Action stations

We are told the shepherds shared the news of Jesus' birth with all they met. Think about what message you would want to share about your faith or about Christmas? How would you want to share it? Can you put it into action? Some ideas:

- Online media
- Poster
- Video the created in today's session
- Rap or poem or song
- Article for Church magazine, etc.

Have some resources to hand for those wishing to respond creatively.

What things need to be considered when deciding how to share your message?

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. **How do you share good news?**
- Research something suggested by JPIT, [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](https://www.jpit.org.uk) Commitment For Life [cforl.co.uk](https://www.cforl.co.uk)
- See if you can find a good news story in your church or community which you could share with others. Perhaps your church has a newsletter or magazine you could put it in.

Thank you for exploring the **Luke** 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