



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>

Psalm 72:10-11 - gifts from afar

Theme: People from all over the world are part of God's story

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

“We three kings of Orient are”... What picture does that phrase conjure up? Three wealthy men on camels silhouetted against a desert sky? An image beloved of Christmas cards for many years. In truth, they were probably greater in number, riding horses, and had servants with them, but let's not allow fact to get in the way of F.A.Y.R.

You'd be right in thinking that the 'three kings' (or the three Magi, or the three wise men) don't turn up in the Christmas story until after Jesus has been born – so why are we focussing on them in Advent?

We don't know exactly who they were – although we've given them names – Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. We don't know exactly what they were - Matthew's gospel called them 'Magi' – astrologers or Seers – the idea that they were Kings came later. We don't even know that there were three of them – we just assume that, because there were three gifts, there were three gifters! But they certainly belong in Advent because, although they didn't turn up until after Jesus was born, their journey, just like our Advent journey, started a long time before. They had to prepare. They realised that something important was happening when they first saw the star. And they wanted to be part of whatever it was – they could have sent a messenger or a servant, but they travelled in person to Bethlehem.

We've looked at how the birth of the Christ-child meant that the shepherds, often seen as the 'least' or 'poorest' in 1st century society had a part to play in God's story, the inclusion of these,



the 'most' or 'richest' in society, shows us that God's story is for everyone – and everyone has a role to play. In the same way, the shepherds were local people, in the fields near Bethlehem, while these travellers, just as in the psalm we are reading, were from distant lands and cultures.

After meeting Jesus and his family, they 'returned a different way'. We are given an explanation for this; they wanted to avoid King Herod, but it's also true to say that, having met Jesus, things changed. And maybe that is the same for all of us today. When we get to know Jesus Christ, things can never be the same.

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 game – One King came from.....

This game requires memory and good listening skills.

Sitting in a circle one person starts by saying, one King came from.....and completes the sentence with a country and then something that originates from that country. So for instance.....One King came from China and bought a wok, the next person repeats the first persons sentence but then adds to it with a different country and item that country is known for. So for instance..... One King came from China and bought a wok, one King came from Manchester and bought a football kit. This continues round the circle until someone can't remember and it starts all over again with that person. I wonder how far you can get!

See this week's Faith Adventures : Children Together for more 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

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.

Watch: The forth wise man – Skit guys

https://youtu.be/5Ya1GArvE_c?si=tL7jiDRNmGAprA3

Questions for discussion

- What would you take for Jesus and why?
- What gift does Jesus really want?
- Is there anything you couldn't take to Jesus?

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:

The visitors from the East are not always explored fully as part of the Christmas story. This is an opportunity to consider who these people were and what cultures they were from. It is also an opportunity to consider how cultures around the world relate to this part of the story as part of the Epiphany celebrations.

In all countries around the world we have our own interpretations of the nativity scene, reflecting who we are and our own culture. (You could show some examples if you like see nativity scenes from around the world on Google.)

Have you ever wondered who the wise men were? How many were there? Where did they come from? What did they look like? What did they sound like?

Take some time to research the questions using these online links or you may have books you could use too.

<https://www.whychristmas.com/customs/epiphany>

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/nativity-creche-around-the-world>

https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/epiphany_around_the_globe

<https://time.com/5923009/three-kings-wisemen-history-magi-bible/>

<https://www.nga.gov/features/rubens-magi/biblical-magi.html>

Watch this short report about the journey of the Wise ones

https://youtu.be/R7fggVO37eE?si=_ksDrEikvdoFDKi5

Talking together: Going deeper

- I wonder who the wise people are today?
- I wonder if the wise men/kings travelled together or whether they met up there?
- How long might it have taken them to get there and what sort of things might have happened on the way?

- Why didn't they just send a messenger with the gifts?
- I wonder if they had servants travelling with them?
- What gifts might the others have brought if there were more than three kings?
- Do you think anyone else brought them gifts?
- Where did the kings/wise men go afterwards and what did they do?

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 3 – The wise men

Dear God,
 This candle we light
 is for the wise men
 who travelled in faith and hope
 following the star.
 Help us to bring our gifts to the Christ Child
 With faith and hope in our hearts.
 As we journey with the wise ones,
 in this time of waiting and getting ready,
 may our hope shine bright .
 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.

Scrapbooking/ journalling – day in the life of a wise man

What you need:

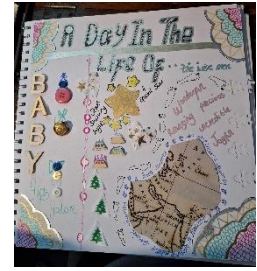
- Good quality paper or canvas board
- Pens
- Scissors



- Glue
- Gems, buttons, stickers, things to decorate
- Bits of maps, stars and things to represent gifts
- Stamps, stencils and washi tape

What you do:

The aim of this activity is to create a journal page or scrapbook page relating to a day in the life of one of the wise men journeying to see Jesus. It would be beneficial to take a few minutes, before starting, to think about what that might be like, what things might they include in their journal, what words or pictures are important to include. This is an opportunity to put yourself in someone else's shoes and to just be creative with it.



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. **Where's the furthest you have travelled and why did you go there?**
- Research something suggested by JPIT, [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](https://jpit.uk) Commitment For Life cforl.co.uk
- Download Skyview Lite app on your smartphone or apple handset, take some time exploring the sky, the moon and the galaxies. What is the brightest star you can find?

Thank you for exploring the **Psalm** 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