



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: 36-38 – Anna in the Temple

Theme: We are chosen as God’s light-carriers, carrying God’s light into everyday life

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

Luke and Candlemas

During the festival of Candlemas, we remember how Jesus (the light of the world) was brought to the Temple to be blessed. We see how Simeon and Anna responded. Simeon recognised who Jesus was, Anna recognised too but went a step further and shared this knowledge with others. This session gives us an opportunity to consider how we share Jesus with others, taking God’s light out into our communities. During Candlemas, Christians around the world take their candles to their local church where they are blessed and then used for the rest of the year; for Christians, these candles serve as a symbol of Jesus, who is the Light of the World.

Anna was a prophet, her job was to speak God’s words into our world, Prophecy could be described as shards of God’s light breaking through into our darkness, giving glimpses of God’s kingdom.

We too are blessed and carry God’s light out into the world – not just physically in carrying a candle, but in the things we say and do and the way we spread God’s good news. Just like a candle spreads light out into a darkened space with beams of light reaching out in all directions, we carry the news of God’s love and forgiveness.

Be Aware – Some Bible versions of this story say Anna worshipped by not eating. This is a practice called fasting. We are not called to worship God by harming our bodies by not eating healthily, and this is especially true for growing bodies in the childhood and teenage years. God does not wish us harm – God loves us just as we are. Some adults may cut down what or when they eat or go without certain foods for short periods of time as part of their religious practice but this should only be done carefully and wisely. God will never ask us to do anything that causes harm to our minds or our bodies – minds and bodies that God created !

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

Pass it on!

Agree a small item at the beginning of the session (such as a lego figure or birthday candle) that will be passed around the group. The aim of the game is to pass the item onto another person as quickly as possible without them realising, as soon as you discover you have the object.

At the end of the session, find out who has the object and how many people have had the object during the session. Did anyone have the object more than once? Who found the item most quickly?



See this week's Faith Adventures : Children Together for other games on 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 or the Contemporary English Version
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke+2%3A+36-38&version=CEV>

Watch: https://youtu.be/3-Uy0LAOE_A?si=HOfZUnbQZ_9j4-hP
 Kermit talks about light and dark

Questions for discussion

- How does darkness make you feel? What about the light?
- Do you think that darkness and light make good metaphors for the coming of Jesus?
- What similarities strike you between the Bible passage and this video?
- Which of the two characters in the video clip do you most relate to?

Light a Candle – The Bowery - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=926L5yp7B6A>
 My Lighthouse by Rend Collective https://youtu.be/IFBZJGSgyVQ?si=_9NX0jttvEtWA7uY
 This Little Light of Mine rap - LZ7 https://youtu.be/_C4XwH7UitU?si=6KkcMt0H5v1eLBZh

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 reflective story from Faith Adventures: Children Together. Alternatively, why not use the following way to explore the theme:

“Darkness and blackness and night are too often compared to lightness and whiteness and day and found deficient, but let us name the beauty and goodness and holiness of darkness and blackness and night.”

These are the opening lines taken from the book “God’s Holy Darkness” by Sharei Green & Beckah Selnick This book deconstructs anti-Blackness in Christian theology, showcasing and celebrating instances in the Bible where darkness, blackness and night are beautiful, good and holy. Spend some time reading the book and explore some of the passages covered.

Book - God’s Holy Darkness, by Sharei Green & Beckah Selnick
<https://www.eden.co.uk/christian-books/christian-books-for-children/life-issues-for-children/childrens-difficult-issues/gods-holy-darkness/>

Watch a reading online at https://youtu.be/B8caOBjG0xc?si=1Vq_OZeyFLqWVzyO

Discuss together your own thoughts and ideas about darkness and light and how you might otherwise describe the Kingdom of God breaking through into the everyday world. Do you see yourself as part of God’s kingdom? How do you make a difference in the world in a big or a small way because of your faith?

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.

What is Candlemas? A 50 second explainer

<https://youtu.be/DfrevImN540?si=c7uCF9d71ow0Gnoy>

Such Light (Poem) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOpibON0OKw>

Talking together: Going deeper

What made Anna a prophet? We know nothing more about her from the Bible.

Do you have to be a prophet to prophesy?

Is prophesy the same as prediction?

What other prophets do you know of in the Bible?

Conversation starters

Think about using one candle to light another. Sharing light doesn't diminish your own light, it just makes the light brighter. But a candle, or any light, needs fuel – in the case of a candle it is the wax and the wick burning in the presence of oxygen. So if we carry the metaphor of carrying God's light into the world, where do you get your fuel?

Express

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

Praying together

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.

Candle creative prayer

You will need prepared wicks and beeswax sheets, sufficient for one each. These can be purchased relatively cheaply online.

Listen to Lauren Daigle sing Light of the World

https://youtu.be/_cLhaZIBSpo?si=rGU1IVqYoPGHgGrP and, while you listen, create a candle by placing the wick at one end of the rectangle of beeswax the rolling the sheet tightly around it. You might choose to cut the sheet in half diagonally before you start and roll from the larger end to make a cone-shaped candle instead of a cylindrical one.

As you roll it, listen to the lyrics of the song and welcome Jesus in your own silent prayer. As the song finishes and your candle is complete, you could light it and have a moment of silence.

If you are unable to source the materials to make your own candle, use a simple white candle. Warm the back of the bowl of a spoon over a tealight and use this to press leaves or petals or feathers etc firmly against the side of the candle. The heat from the spoon will melt the wax slightly, enabling the items to stick to it.

Peace Prayer

Many churches use this prayer by John Johansen-Berg to pray for peace. Have a candle for each person present. You could use nightlights which you light with a taper passed from one to another, or you could use candles (which are pushed through a circle of cardboard to prevent the dripping of wax) and pass the light from one to the next as you pray. If risk assessments make this impractical or unsafe, use one large candle on a table which one person could light with a taper.

I/we light this candle for peace, Lord.
 May its light scatter the darkness.
 May its flame be a symbol of hope.
 May its burning be a sign of faith,
 joining with many other lights for peace.
 I/we light this candle for peace.
 May our lives be an expression of peace – making.
 May we seek to be lights in a dark world,
 pointing to you Jesus, the Prince of Peace,
 and following you in the way of peace.
 Let the candle burn, let the light shine, as a sign for peace,
 offered to you.
 John Johansen – Berg



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.

If you have not used the candle making activity as creative prayer, you might simply make the candles as a creative response activity.

STEM-based activity – light refraction

Anna recognised in Jesus the light of the world. In this activity you are encouraged to spend some time experimenting with light and reflection as we consider our role as reflecting that light in our society, especially into the dark corners of our world. What might we mean by that?

Use whatever you can – plates, water, mirrors, CDs, torches, metal implements such as spoons, watches etc. Using a stationary light source such as a torch, lamp, sunlight through the windows, can you use mirrors or other items to reflect the light and redirect it into other parts of the room? You may need to bounce the light from one item to another. Experiment a little.

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 situations in the world today feel like dark places or times?**
 - Research something suggested by JPIT, [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](https://www.jpit.uk) Commitment For Life [cforl.co.uk](https://www.cforl.co.uk)
 - Take time out this week to spread the good news of what Jesus means to you, either by talking to someone about your faith or by doing something that brings God's love where it is needed.
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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