



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>

Joel 2: 28-29 – God is.... Spirit

Theme: Involve God in everything because God's involved in us

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

This reading from Joel emphasises the message that God's Spirit is for everybody, not just the rich, or the important – but the least in society too (in Old Testament times, that would have been females, children, servants and slaves). The focus of this passage is not just on the people who will be filled with the Spirit (everyone!) but God's desire, and promise, that the Spirit will fill everyone.

The recommended translation uses some less than inclusive language – talking of sons/daughters, young/old, women/men so, knowing your group, you might need to explore this a little more – is the Spirit not available to the middle-aged or people who don't identify fully with only one gender? Being poetic language, and also written in a time when it might have been taken for granted that the Spirit would be given to some, may give some insight into the way it was expressed.

One of the questions to ask in 'talking together' is about the difference between a dream and a vision. Do we dream about things that have happened, and have visions about things that might happen in the future? If so, how does Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech fit? Perhaps a dream is passive but a vision is active – and that's why the Spirit will give old people dreams, but young people visions?

What is clear in the passage is that being filled with the Spirit requires us actually to do something – to proclaim (share) the good news of God's love for God's creation with the people we meet. Remember, if children and young people have dreams and visions, the Church (and church) has to give them opportunity to share and to help them realise that future – not continually give them

reasons why “it’ll never work.” What might that mean in your situation? How could your church support all ages in ensuring their voices are heard?

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. Alternatively you might try one of these games about sharing a message and keeping going until everybody gets it.

Scissors

Scissors is a good game to play only once. If you do not have a pair of scissors, two sticks, two pencils or anything which can simulate open or closed scissors will work.

Get the group to sit in a circle. Each person passes the scissors to the person on their right. The leader starts by passing the scissors, to their neighbour, saying either “I pass these scissors open” or “I pass these scissors closed”.

The person receiving the scissors does the same while passing to the next person. The leader (and anyone else who has caught on to the trick) announces if the statement is right or wrong.

Play continues until everyone can pass the scissors correctly.

The trick has nothing to do with the scissors. Open and closed refer to whether the person's legs or feet are uncrossed (open) or crossed (closed) when passing the scissors on to the next person.

- An alternative game is to pass an imaginary box saying “I pass this box to(name of the person you are passing it to) and in it is an elephant (or any other animal)”. Again, leader says whether the message is passed correctly, and this time it depends on whether the receiver says “Thank you” or not.

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: Understand How the Holy Spirit Works in the Bible - The Bible Project

<https://youtu.be/oNNZO9i1Gjc?si=drZ7BybAKiH4BvIA>

Song – Holy Spirit Come – Yancy

<https://youtu.be/6f1zaNUMoy4?si=rcqHb5KAdW8MCweX>

Questions for discussion

- Watch the YouTube video. What strikes you most about the things that are shared in this video? How does it fit with the reading we have just read from Joel?
- Listen to the song by Yancy. How is the Holy Spirit described here? The song mentions revival – what do you understand by this?

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 passage uses poetic language to explore and express big ideas: no one is too young or too old or too unimportant to be missed out - God's Spirit is for everyone! Exploring the passage together can help us to think boldly about our hopes and dreams for communities we live in and our world. You might like to use other passages from the Bible as well, like the Beatitudes, showing other examples of God's Topsy-Turvy Kingdom. Here are two different ideas for you to try:

Write a poem

- Make a list of things together that your group would like to see change, locally or globally....a hopeful list.
- On a separate piece of paper write a list of what the opposites might look like (such as: Wars around the world as the opposite to a world full of peace *or* a world that has forgotten fighting)
- Work as a group to order the hopeful statements into a poem.
- You could start and end with a verse, or a phrase, of the Bible reading.

Headline Drama

- Spread out a selection of newspapers or printouts from online media.
- Ask everyone to choose a headline or news story that they feel strongly about.
- In pairs, or as a large group, spend some time talking about how the stories make people feel.
- Each person should then choose a dream word or phrase, to show how they would like to see the situation change.
- Spread everyone out around the room and ask each person to place their story on the floor in front of them.
- Read the passage again then invite each person in turn to stand on their story, saying their dream word or phrase out loud. You could repeat the exercise, without prompts, for a more fluid piece of drama – using the same order will help people to remember when it is their turn to speak.

If the members of the group don't like speaking out loud, make a list of the chosen words and phrases. As they are read out, people can listen for their 'dream' and step onto their newspaper when they hear it.

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: https://youtu.be/fR-PRWhMGM?si=2k9O_fqi2QZV4fuZ I have a dream

Discuss: This video captures just a very small part of a very famous speech. Have you heard of it before? This is part of Martin Luther King's dream in 1963. King was an activist and a Baptist minister and he was calling for equal rights and an end to racism in America. How do you think this dream links (if at all) to this week's reading? Where do you see the Holy Spirit at work in Martin Luther King? Perhaps you could have a go, either as a group or individually, to writing your own speech or poem about the dreams of today's people.

Talking together: Going deeper

- Does God speak to non-Christians as well as Christians?
- What is the message you want to share? What do you want to speak God into?
- How can you share God's message and get people to listen to you?
- Find out what the URC Charter towards children in the church says about the Holy Spirit. What do you think it means? How do you see this in practice? The charter is a vision for how the URC can/ should look. What needs to happen for us to get there? What are the barriers? What do you need from others to enable it to happen and how could we make that known?

https://urc.org.uk/images/Children-and-youth/documents/Charter_for_Children_in_the_Church.pdf

Conversation starters

- What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
- Do you think the church and/or society actually listen to what children and young people have to say?
- Who are the people who have the least say in our world?

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

Living God,

We ask that you open our hearts and minds,

so we can receive your Spirit which you pour out on each of us.

Help us to live your ways and to share the message

that your spirit, your love, your friendship is for all;

Fill our minds with your dreams and your visions

for our lives and the world around us,

and help us to share our dreams and visions with you too.

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.

Research – There are lots of different symbols and images used to represent the Holy Spirit. A well known one is the dove but there are several others. Can you find out what they are and think about what aspects of the Spirit they represent?

What about the fruits of the Spirit – have you heard of these? Research in your Bible and find out what they are.

How could you use your gifts and talents to create something on this theme? Maybe a banner or poster, an embroidery, a model, a song or poem or piece of music, a reel or anything you can think of at all!

Find out more about the United Reformed Church (URC).

The United Reformed Church is a big family made up of lots of very different congregations and churches with a wide range of views on their faith and the Bible.

Have a look at this website <https://www.gear.org.uk/> Did you know that this exists and is part of the URC? What do you think about it? GEAR pray regularly for the URC – you might want to look at their Facebook page and hear some of the things they pray about.

<https://www.facebook.com/Pray4URC>



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's the difference between a dream and a vision?**
 - Research something suggested by JPIT [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](http://jpit.uk) or Commitment For Life cforl.co.uk
 - Take time to sit quietly with God during your prayer time and, instead of talking, try listening for God. You may not hear an actual voice – few people do – but the Holy Spirit inside you may well help you sense what God is saying to you.
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Thank you for exploring the **Joel** 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

