



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 78: 70-72 & Luke 2: 8-20 – Ordinary shepherds

Theme: God uses ordinary people to share extraordinary news

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

Luke and Psalms

The book of Luke was written around 60 AC by Luke, the doctor who became a disciple of Jesus. Luke wanted to show that Jesus was God’s son, who came to the world for everyone, Jew, Gentile, rich, poor, an extraordinary Saviour for the ordinary everyday people. This is why his books tell the stories of everyday people and their part in God’s big story. Meanwhile the Psalm tells of another ordinary person, David, who was called to use his shepherding skills to become a leader and protector of God’s people, and who shared the good news through his song writing. Shepherding in 1st Century Palestine was very different from shepherding in the UK today – a shepherd would live with the sheep and would lead them rather than driving them with a dog or a quadbike. Overnight the sheep would be gathered into a sheepfold, a circular stone wall with a gap in where the sheep could go in and out, and the shepherd would keep guard over the entry to protect the sheep from straying or being taken by wild animals. It was a skilled job but kept them on the margins of society. Yet through the angels they were prompted to meet Jesus, and having met Jesus, they wanted to spread the news. There are many different ways of sharing good news. The shepherds, both the ones in the Christmas story and David who wrote the Psalm, were just ordinary people who would have been a frequent sight in the region, again unlike today in the UK, and lived on the margins of society.



Together

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

If you are not in a mixed-age group, where you might be supporting younger ones in using the gathering prayer in Faith Adventures: Children Together, you could use this opening prayer or open the session with a prayer of your 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 online 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, Contemporary English

Watch: Rise up shepherds and follow, by CityChurchSF - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hs29EJF5e8I>

Questions for discussion

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

- Are there any lyrics that stand out to you? Why?
- *"There's a star in the East on Christmas morn, It will lead you to the place where the Saviour's born"* – The star was a sign of Jesus entering the world. What things might we see today which remind us of Jesus' presence in the world?
- *"Follow, Follow..."* – Who or what do you follow? Do these things/ people guide you in your day-to-day life? Who/where do you go for support and guidance?
- *"Leave your flocks and leave your lamb..."* – How do you think the shepherds would have felt when they were told to get up and leave their animals behind? What might be some of the things that can distract us from following Jesus?
- *"Rise up shepherd and follow."* – The Shepherds listened and followed the angels' instructions. Is there anything that you feel called to "Rise up" about? What might God be calling you to tell others?
- The words of the song really emphasise how important this news is and what a difference it will make. We know the shepherds shared this exciting news with others once they had seen the child. Is this news you want to share? How might you do that and who would you share it with?



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:

This activity section explores what the best ways are to share good news. It is also an opportunity to consider who we get our news from and who we can trust.

Use this opportunity to explore how we hear different stories and who we trust and why.

Collect different forms/versions of the same story, try to choose a good news story that is current and well known such as a new signing to a major football team, or a political decision.

Look together at all the different sources of the same story and compare them.

What do you notice?

How does the story change depending on the author and the audience? How do they try to grab your attention or make you read on? Think about why you might believe or doubt the story they share. What would make you question what is written or said?

Is there any difference in the way good news and bad news is reported? Which do we see most?

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.

Talking together: Going deeper

- What sort of news should we share? What sort of news should we keep to ourselves? How do we differentiate or tell the difference between them?
- How do you imagine the shepherds shared the news they had heard? How do you imagine people responded to what the shepherds had to say?
- If shepherds were on the edges of society, why do you think God chose them to spread the news? Is it important for people on the edges of society to have a voice?

Conversation starters

- I wonder who told you about Jesus?
- Many people find it difficult to talk about their faith, especially in certain settings. I wonder what makes it difficult to share news about what you believe?



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.

Prayer web

What you need: wool (Tip: ensure there is a slack of wool each time it's thrown to ensure the person holding the wool is not yanked about)

Ask everyone to space themselves out in a circle (or around the room if you are feeling confident with this activity).

One person starts with the ball of wool and shares a prayer out loud or in their heart silently. Once finished they keep hold of the end of the wool and throw the ball to someone else in the room. That person then has the opportunity to say a prayer or pray in their heart, keeping hold of part of the wool, then throw the ball of wool on. The ball of wool keeps being thrown until everyone has had a turn. You should be left with a web of prayers, which like news has been shared among the group. Now each person can look along the two lines of wool that stretch from the point they are holding to the two people holding the other end of each of those lines. Ask God to bless those two people – which means that everyone in the group will be prayed for by two others in the group.

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.

Making A Message Travel

Resources: A bowl of water and a coin/pebble.

Drop the coin/pebble into the bowl of water – notice the way the ripples move outwards in all directions. Imagine that the coin/pebble is a message that you want to share.

Discussion activity: As a group, make a list of all the different ways used to send a message (text message, email, talking, letter, song, TikTok, YouTube, etc.)

Some of these will only get a message to one person (text, letter, talking) and some have the potential to send a message to a lot of people – many of whom you won't know.

Talk about each different way the group has identified – talk about the pros and cons of the different methods and share what might be the blocks to the message getting through, and how we can make our efforts more effective.

Discussion: "A lie can travel halfway round the world while the truth is putting on its shoes." Does the group think this is true? If so, why might it be? What might we do to change that?

Noticing 'Good News'!

The church has good news to share this Christmas time, but how effectively does it do it? Set your group the research task of looking for 'Good News'. Using the church notice board or website, think about:

- What it tells them about the church
- What good news the church is sharing about Christmas
- What different things or events are happening
- Are there things they would like to share about church?
- What one thing would they add to the church noticeboard about Christmas

Why not look at other church noticeboards nearby, or research other local church websites, thinking about what is similar and what is different about them. Do they reach out to people and share the good news in a way that makes people want to know more?

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.
 - Research something suggested by JPIT [Resources \(jpit.uk\)](http://jpit.uk) or Commitment For Life cforl.co.uk
 - Watch this short video of the Christmas story and chat to someone about the question. **What is the most extraordinary part of Christmas for you?** https://youtu.be/_OLezoUvOEQ
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Thank you for exploring the Psalm and 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



Rise up, Shepherd and Follow - Lyrics

Oh, there's a star in the East on Christmas morn
Rise up, shepherd, and follow
It will lead you to the place where the saviour's born
Rise up shepherd, and follow

Leave your ewes and leave your rams
Rise up shepherd, and follow
Leave your sheep and leave your lambs
Rise up, shepherd, and follow

Follow, follow
Rise up, shepherd, and follow
Follow the star to Bethlehem
Rise up, shepherd, and follow

Come on now
Follow

Now, if you take good heed to the angel's word
Rise up, shepherd, and follow
You'll forget your flock, forget your herd
Rise up, shepherd, and follow

You gotta leave your ewes and leave the lambs
Rise up shepherd, and follow
You gotta leave your sheep and leave your rams
Rise up, shepherd, and follow

Follow, follow

Rise up, shepherd, and follow
Follow the star to Bethlehem
Rise up, shepherd, and follow

Follow
Follow

In a cradle of straw is a babe asleep
Rise up, shepherd, and follow
Born that man no more will weep
Rise up, shepherd, and follow

Leave your burdens, lay them down
Rise up, shepherd, and follow
For you that child will wear a crown
Rise up, shepherd, and follow



Follow, you got to follow
Rise up, shepherd, and follow
Follow the star to Bethlehem
Rise up, shepherd, and follow

Rise up

There's a light in the sky shining crystal clear
Rise up, rise up
Move on, move on
There's a megaphone singing to my fear
Rise up, 'cause he's born, he's born
Rise and go, you're being released
Rise up, rise up
Move on, move on
Born this morning is the prince of peace (born this morning is the prince of peace)
Rise up, I rise up, I rise up, rise up

Follow
You got to follow
Rise up, rise up, rise up
You got to follow

Rise and go, you're being released (follow)
You got to follow
You gotta follow, yeah
Rise up, rise up, rise up (rise up)
You got to follow
I follow, follow, follow
Rise up

Source: [Musixmatch](#)
Songwriters: Robert Mathes / Traditional
Rise up, Shepherd and Follow lyrics © Maybe I Can Music, River Oaks Music Co.