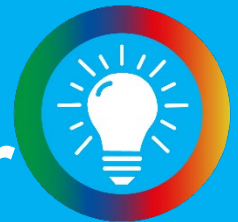




Faith Adventures for Children Together



How and why to use this resource

*Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church and beyond.*

FACT – A Bible-based children's group resource

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Values

It will be:

- **Bible-based** - every issue is based on a passage from the Bible, encouraging children together to experience the story, explore it in new ways which relate to their daily life experience, and express their own response
- **Creative, playful and sustainable** – the essence of childhood is creativity and playfulness and these are the best way for our scriptures to come to life for children and adults alike. We aim to be environmentally aware in activities and use of resources.
- **Inclusive and accessible** – God's love is for all, and this resource aims to be accessible to all children, regardless of age, gender, 'churched-ness', wealth, education, physical or cognitive needs, locality etc.
- **Fostering God-connection** – This resource is designed to encourage and enable children and adults to talk and listen to God and become friends of Jesus for themselves.
- **URC distinct** – there are lots of resources out there, but this resource is written primarily with URC children in mind. There is a focus on social justice and walking the way, a focus on the Bible, inclusivity and an encouragement to develop a personal understanding which may differ from that of others but is still accepted and respected.
- **Enable curiosity and provide challenge** – the hope is that all that are involved in the session, leaders and participants feel challenged and learn, wonder and grow together.



Purpose

This resource gives URC churches a free flexible weekly outline to use in services, groups, wider settings etc with all ages, particularly including children from 0-12 – and encouraging them to resource faith at home through enabling children, parents and grandparents to experience, explore and express faith through those activities and providing a simple 'take home' connected resource.

- It will develop URC Children through resourcing churches and families/households.
- It will support the Children and Youth Friendly Church scheme focusing on children's spirituality.
- It will enable children and young people to play their part in the mission of God.
- It links to Faith Adventures Youth Resource for 11 to 14s.

Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

It is good to know a little bit about the passage and where it fits into the Bible before you begin. Read the passage, maybe in a couple of different versions, and read this short introduction to help you think about the context of the passage and what the passage means to you. This section may also help you think about how to tackle any tricky subjects that may arise.

Then think about the children you are working with and their needs. What from our resources would work best for them? Do you need to adapt any?

You will probably not want to use everything in this resource – it will depend on your setting, the length of your session, the age and interests of the children in the group. However we do recommend having a routine to start your session and then doing something from each section: experience, explore and express.

What are Experience, explore and express?

Our faith adventure takes us around the Bible, exploring different passages each week and generally gathered loosely around a theme for the month, although most weeks will be stand-alone. They do not link to the lectionary, however the Bible Index <https://bit.ly/BibleIndex> which lists all the sessions does include a column detailing where the stories link to the lectionary readings. Faith is not about learning; it's about growing in relationship with God through Jesus and with others of all ages on the path together, guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Our role is to create an environment where children can experience God's word, explore what it means for them as an individual and as part of God's family the church, and express their own response.

Together – Prayer and games

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

Starting a session with a prayer grounds the session in God.

While children like variety, most also really like structure, and a prayer that is used every time can be a good way to help children feel secure and involved. Remember there may be newcomers who are unfamiliar with the prayer, or children with memory difficulties, so maybe give them a written version or use actions they can join in with. Choose from the two prayers provided or use your own. There are templates at the end of this "how to" resource.



Games are useful for helping children work off some steam, to relax and bond together as a group. This resource contains an option for an active or a quieter game. These games are linked to the theme so are a good way of introducing the theme from the start. In a longer session, you might wish to supplement the game in this resource with one of your group's favourites.

Experience – Bible story and songs

Hear, watch and sing the Bible story

Each week we will look at different versions of the Bible and recommend which version might be best for your session. We will give you a link to that version in Bible Gateway and this text is on the postcard for children to take home. If you choose a different Bible version, please make sure that it uses everyday language that the children will understand and that it also uses inclusive language where appropriate. This means using words like "people" instead of "men" and not always presenting God as male.

Where can I find the story online?

There will always be two online versions of the Bible story, one aimed at younger children and one more suitable for slightly older children. Do make sure you've watched them in advance if you decide to use an online video clip to tell the story.

Songs to support the story

There will always be two songs with links to help you find them, one aimed at younger children and one more suitable for slightly older children or all age worship. Of course, you may use familiar songs instead, if you want to have a time for singing. These are just suggestions.

Explore – ways into the theme

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A new way to explore the theme

Each week there will be a way to explore the Bible theme and passage, written by our team, it may be in the form of a story, game, meditative reflection or discussion. Use these to help the children unpack the theme.

Should we include a new story written by us please feel free to use them in any of your settings, they are not copyrighted.



What are modern parables?

Parables are stories that Jesus told which paint a picture of the message he wanted to share by putting it in a context that people could understand. They did not always explicitly mention God. Many of today's stories for children do that too, even if they're not explicitly Christian. We will suggest one such story but you may know of more. These stories may help to explore the Bible story from a new perspective. Please use the Facebook group to share your suggestions – when we find a good children's book, it's always good to share with others!

Talking together: How might we talk about the Bible story together?

The talking together questions give an opportunity to have a focused chat around the theme. They encourage interaction within the group, adults and children together. This would be good to do whilst still all together.

Wondering: ways to reflect on the theme

The beauty of wondering questions is that they don't imply there is a right or wrong answer, they are a chance for adults and children alike to ponder together. They can be used to encourage more chatting on the theme and are perfect for while a craft or similar activity is happening, though they can be used at any time. These types of questions do not assume a response.

What's in the box? What is the purpose of this section?

Our younger children, and some children with additional needs, benefit from a more concrete experience of the story and the items listed here are common, everyday items which children can play with. They all link with the story or the theme in some way. You could tell the story in your own words or use a Toddler Bible if it's a story that is in there. We recommend The Beginners' Bible For Toddlers or the Lion First Bible as good versions to use. The resource has some suggestions of the kind of thing you might talk about with the children as they play.

Small play toys such as Playmobil people or other toys can be used to re-enact the story, or why not dress up other toys as characters?

Loose parts play uses bits of felt, stones, items from nature such as twigs and leaves, or household bits and pieces to make pictures to retell the story or represent the theme or simply to explore. Read more here : <https://www.pacey.org.uk/news-and-views/pacey-blog/2019/march-2019/getting-to-grips-with-loose-parts-play/>

This section will list some items you could provide for your under-fives together with some prompts for conversations you could have as you explore the items in the box. Promote some excitement, a bit of awe and wonder, by the way you share the items with the children. The routine of having the items in a box or bag that you open with a familiar song will help the children know what to expect and will connect the play items with the story rather than them simply being things to play with.



Express – prayer and creative activities

Praying together: enabling your group to respond spiritually

Praying together: how can you involve the children actively in prayer?

Our aim is to create opportunities for children to see prayer as talking and listening personally to God, as much a part of life as talking and listening to others, and something that can happen in many different ways. Children (and adults too) can often disengage from prayers spoken or written on their behalf by others, but tapping into their creativity and their everyday experience enables the prayers to be truly theirs.

Do not worry if the prayers do not feel like the prayers you are used to experiencing in church.

The resource offers a creative prayer and a spoken prayer to choose from (or you could do both at various points in the session)

Alternatively, you could use the URC prayer prompt cards to encourage children to lead prayers. You can find these cards on the website bit.ly/Child-prayer-cards as a download. If you would like to order physical packs email children.youth@urc.org.uk

Responding together: how can you facilitate children making God's message their own?

You could choose from the craft included in the resource, small play (Lego, Playmobil, etc.), colouring, or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond.

The basket could include things like different colours and types of paper, glue stick, scissors, different kinds of writing or colouring materials such as felt tips and chalk, scraps of felt and fabric, feathers, lollipop sticks, beads etc. Children might respond by making/drawing/writing or in some other way, you do not need to direct this.

The wondering section is presented as questions but phrased so that they do not require a response, they are exactly that, a time to wonder and reflect and respond if wanted.

The resource provides instructions for a structured creative response that you might choose instead of giving children free choice, though it is good even with these not to expect children to produce a carbon copy of the finished result but to develop their own ideas using their own creativity.

Although we have included a colouring sheet, colouring should never be used just as a time filler or easy option and you should be aware that not all children enjoy colouring. It is, however, an activity that could be done if there is limited time as it can be taken home and completed later, and it can be a good way of engaging children's hands while having a conversation about the theme or while they listen to a story.



Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

Our faith isn't just for one day a week, it's something that influences our whole lives as we aim to be disciples of Jesus, living the life of Jesus in all we say or think or do. You could use the suggestions in the resource of things that children might try to do during the week ahead. Better still, you could talk with the children about ways in which they might live out (express) the message they've gained through experiencing and exploring the Bible passage in their everyday lives.

The postcard home – what is it for?

Children spend far more time out of church than in it, so part of our role is to equip and encourage families to explore and express their faith at home. Some children will have families which support them in this, others may be unsupported in their faith at home and want something that they can do on their own. The postcard home (the content of which has been decided upon by consulting with a range of children in different contexts) is designed to give them a simple take-home that will give them a suggested prayer idea, a wondering question and an easy activity to do based on the theme, as well as the Bible story text.

Even if you don't run the sessions, you could give the postcard to members of your congregation to pass on to grandchildren, young friends or godchildren etc.

Sharing and networking: We would like to encourage you to support one another and us by building a sense of community. We have a Facebook public group for Faith Adventures where you can share pictures of things your group has made and done or different crafts, modern day parables, resources, prayers etc, you have found or just chat about things in general or ask questions or share news.

We will also post additional ideas, videos etc on the URC children and youth Facebook page to support you in your work, so please do follow this page to get notifications when anything new appears.

Your feedback will also help us develop the resource to be best suited to the needs of those who use it. Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing **sharon.lloyd@urc.org.uk**

Don't forget our other resources which are available on the website: Our annual themed resource books, Go with Greta/#Connect 2, Friends on Faith Adventures, and our annual holiday club materials and more!

Faith Adventures Facebook: bit.ly/FACT_FB

URC Children and Youth Facebook: <https://bit.ly/URCcyFACEBOOK>

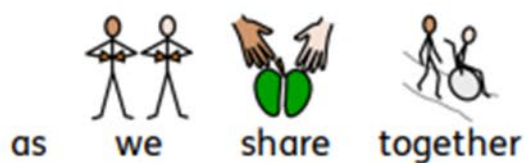




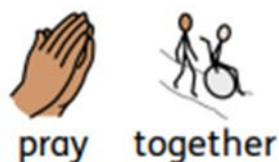
Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



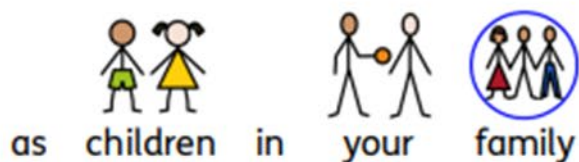
pray together



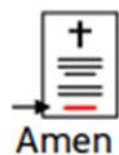
play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen



Alternate hands back and forth





Thank you



God



for bringing



us together,



Help

us to



grow



closer

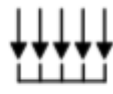
to



you



in



all



we



do



Help

us to



speak



and

to



listen

to



learn



and

to



grow



together



adventuring



together



with



you



wherever



we



may

go



Amen