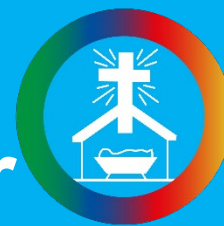




Faith Adventures for Children Together



*Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church 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/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

Isaiah 7: 13-15 and Luke 1:26-31- an ordinary couple

Theme: God can choose ordinary people to do extraordinary things

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

Isaiah and Luke

This week begins our Advent/Christmas season and sessions are designed to run in parallel and to complement the United Reformed Church Children's and Youth Work Advent Resource which is called God in the Ordinary. Be aware that children and families may have this resource at home and that your church may also be linking with it in some way. This resource has deliberately been designed so that it can be linked to the resource or used separately from it. Sometime reference will be made to resources which are part of the Advent pack but are available freely on the URC website or YouTube channels.

This week we consider the theme of an ordinary couple – that Mary (and Joseph) did not have superpowers that equipped them for their vocation, they had all the ordinary emotions, strengths and weaknesses that anybody might have, and yet they still said yes to God. Mary was concerned and troubled by the angel's words, but she still agreed to take on what was to be a challenging and sometimes heart-breaking task. Conversation may go to whether Mary really had a choice – this may appear like God imposing a task on her but Biblical evidence shows that God does accept “no” or “not yet” as an answer. God knew Mary well and could anticipate her response, but did not presume anything. She accepted willingly – an extraordinary thing in itself. Across the URC and beyond, beliefs about Mary and her role in the birth and life of Jesus may vary, but here the focus is on the calling of ordinary people to follow God's call.



Isaiah was a prophet who prophesied / predicted the birth of Jesus more than seven hundred years before the events of the nativity took place. In the second half of his book in the Bible he talks frequently about Jesus's coming as the saviour, a real message of hope.

Together

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

Gathering prayer

Jesus, our friend

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

Be with us today

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

As we share together,

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

Pray together,

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

Play together,

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

And get to know you better,

(point up with one hand)

As children together in your family

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

AMEN

(Two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.

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

In-person game

Yes/No

Mary had the choice to say either 'yes' or 'no' to God's challenge. The aim of the game is for the asker to get the other person to say yes or no. The answerer, however, should avoid using these words at all costs.

Rules of the Yes/No game:

1. Ask for a volunteer to be the 'answerer'.



2. Members of the group take it in turns to ask a question. If the person who is answering the questions says the words 'yes' or 'no,' they are out.
3. In addition to not being able to say yes or no, they also can't say anything that sounds similar to them. For example, they can't say 'na', 'nay', 'yeah' and the like. they also can't nod or shake their head.
4. All answers given must make sense (the answerer can't just say 'banana' to any question!)
5. To ensure the same answers aren't given over and over again, the answerer can't repeat the same answer.
6. They must answer the question within a time limit (5 seconds)
7. If someone does any of the above actions, they are out.

A great opening question is "Do you want to play the yes / no game"? If they reply "Yes" tell them that they're out. They will become wise to this trick however, so enjoy using it while it lasts.

Online game

Outside Game (or if you have space inside)

Mary was an ordinary person who did an extraordinary thing when she agreed to be the mother of Jesus. This game looks at some of the things that make us 'ordinary'. I wonder if any of them make us extraordinary, too?

You will need: A parachute (or a large bedsheet)

Invite the group to arrange themselves around the parachute/bedsheet, holding it with both of their hands.

Identify a trait that is shared by a number of members in your group (e.g. wears spectacles, has brown hair, came to church last Sunday)

On the count of three, the group lift the parachute into the air and everyone who shares that trait must swap places with somebody else before the parachute comes down.

Nobody is 'out' if they fail to swap places, they just take their place somewhere else on the perimeter of the parachute/sheet.

Options: You can call a trait that is applicable to only one person in the group (e.g. a name, or a birthday)

To finish, identify a trait that applies to everyone in the group (e.g. If you are here today)

You can invite group members can suggest traits.

Experience



For this story we recommend using the Children's International Bible

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A26-31&version=ICB> and <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+7%3A+13-15++&version=ICB>

Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: Luke 1:26–38 Animation by Saddleback Kids <https://youtu.be/a1yOY62GFKU>

Over fives: The story of Christmas Mary and Joseph by Saddleback Kids

<https://youtu.be/XkEypzmHwCI>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: Singing with the angels by Vineyard Worship <https://youtu.be/-6fUpINc-SI>

Five to elevens: Celebrate by Lifekids <https://youtu.be/hgrcscz6rl>

Explore

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

After reading the Bible passage together, use the following activity to explore the different emotions that Mary may have experienced when she received the angel's news.

- Label each corner of the room with an emotion (Happy, Sad, Worried or Excited) - You could add an emoji as well to help prompt younger group members. For older group members you could add in four extra emotions e.g. puzzled, overjoyed, annoyed, scared and put these labels at points on the side walls between each of the corners
- Re-read the passage, or use the simple version below, or encourage the group to retell it from memory together, stopping when it mentions an emotion. Leave a blank and ask the group to choose the emotion they think Mary would have felt, and stand by it.
- If they are happy to share, group members can explain why they chose their emotion.
- You could repeat the passage allowing the group to change their choices if someone else's answer has changed their mind.

An older group may prefer to respond using a line or horse shoe shape which moves from Positive to Negative. They could think about the different factors affecting Mary's emotions and notice whether the emotions move in one direction through the passage, or vary.

Mary's emotions!

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, to visit Mary.

The angel shared a message that was.....

Mary was.....- she wasn't sure what the message meant.

The angel told Mary not to be.....

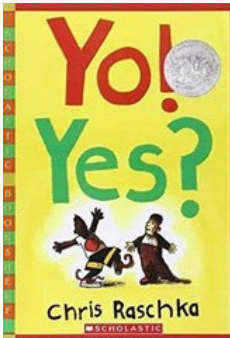
Mary found out she would have a son called Jesus.

Mary agreed. She felt.....



Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too.



'Yo! Yes' by Chris Raschka
<https://youtu.be/MSay0KeER-A>

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

- Mary says yes to God – I wonder what would have happened if she'd said no?
- The angel said that Mary had found favour with God. I wonder why God chose her?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder if people see angels today? What do you think an angel is?
- I wonder, if you could play anyone in a nativity play, who would you want to be?

What's in the box (for under fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing "What's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). You could tap the top of the box twice after the word 'box'. Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- Some images of emojis or a wooden spoon with different faces on each side – talk about the different emotions Mary felt, ask the children to act out the emotion.
- A mirror – encourage the children to pull faces in the mirror to look happy or sad or worried
- A toy house and a toy angel – The angel appeared to Mary in her home not in anywhere special.
- An ordinary play figure and a superhero figure – talk to the children about Mary being just an ordinary person, she wasn't a superhero.
- A nodding toy or puppet – Tell the children that Mary said Yes to the Angel.
- The week 1 book from advent set (an Ordinary Girl) if you have one available – tell the story and look at the pictures. Alternatively a board book telling the story.
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (eg stones, felt, twigs etc)



Express

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

Very Ordinary Prayers – tidying up prayers

You may wish to change your prayer time so that you can use this prayer while you are tidying up after a craft session or before you go home.

Mary was an ordinary girl doing ordinary things when God sent an angel with an extraordinary message. We often have ordinary things to do like tidying up especially when we have been messy making or baking. The surfaces need wiping, things need putting away and the floor needs sweeping. Try talking to God as you do the tidying up. Here are some ideas.

Dear God

As I sweep the floor help me to remember all the people who clean up and look after me....

As I put my rubbish in the bin help me to remember not to be wasteful...

As I put things away in the cupboard help me to remember the people who are without homes or places to stay...

As I wipe the surface clean, help me to be peaceful and calm when things feel all messed up...

These are just a few ideas try thinking of more prayers as you tidy up.



Spoken prayer

God of challenge

It is easy to say 'yes' when we are asked to do something that we enjoy, or want to do.

It is harder to say 'yes' when we are asked to do something that we are worried about, or afraid of, or think we might not be very good at.

We know that you will never ask us to do something that we can't, and that you will be with us, helping, supporting and encouraging us all the time.

We pray that you will make us as brave as Mary so that we can do what you ask us to do and we thank you for all that you have done for us.

Amen.

Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond. <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>.



With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

Nodding Mary

Mary was asked to do an extraordinary thing and she said 'Yes' to God. Here is a craft to help remind you that Mary said yes.

You will need:

- card cut into a circle about the size of a tea plate
- small polystyrene ball
- cocktail stick
- Blu-Tack or plasticine
- Pens / paint / collage materials



What you do:

Make the circle of card into a cone shape and decorate it to make the body for Mary. You could do this with paint, pens or collage materials. Cut the point of the cone to make a very small hole so that the cocktail stick can pass through easily.

Draw a face on the Polystyrene ball and colour in or add some wool for hair. Make a small ball of Blu-Tack or plasticine and push it onto one end of the cocktail stick. Push the cocktail stick through the cone from below. The ball of Blu-Tack is now inside the cone and the other end of the cocktail stick sticking out above the cone. Push the polystyrene ball (head) onto the end of the cocktail stick so that it sits on top of the cone.

Mary can now nod her head to say yes!

Edible Emojis

You will need:

- digestive biscuits
- icing sugar and yellow food colouring
- black writing icing

OR

- mini wraps
- spreading cheese or hummus,
- vegetables to create the face e.g. peppers, celery, tomatoes, cucumber





What you do:

Make up some thick yellow icing.

Spread the icing on the biscuit.

Using writing icing, decorate the biscuits with an emoji from the story, e.g excited, scared, happy

If using a wrap, spread the cheese or hummus over the wrap.

Carefully cut the vegetables to create eyebrow, eyes, and a mouth.

Place them on the wrap to create an emoji from the story.



Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

- If you are not using the URC Advent pack at home, why not think of a way to build your own nativity and add a few pieces to it each week. You could use plasticine, toilet roll middles, toys, natural things like leaves and twigs, cones of paper etc. See here for some examples from the team: <https://pin.it/5lvvnDP>
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 - Mary knew that saying yes to God would not be the easy option. This week, try to avoid taking the easy option and, instead, say yes to helping others in this busy time of year.
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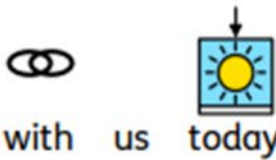
We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **an ordinary couple** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk

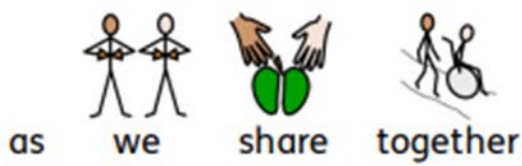
Why not have a look at next week's resource on **the ordinary shepherds**.



Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



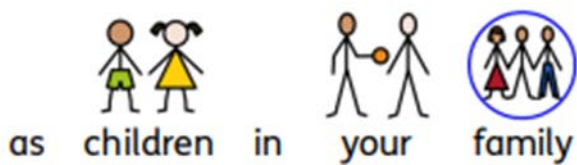
pray together



play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen



Right middle finger touches centre of other palm, repeat with left hand



Alternate hands back and forth





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