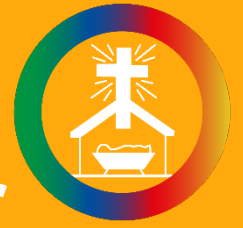




Faith Adventures for Children Together



*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>

Psalm 78: 70-72 and 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 in my planning?

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.

Within this session, one of the wondering questions is about having exciting news. Sometimes people have exciting news that we can tell everyone and sometimes we have to keep it quiet for a while (e.g. for a surprise birthday party) - if it's exciting news that can be quite a challenge,



especially for children. Opinions may differ about whether it is right to talk to children about keeping secrets in the light of safeguarding and if you feel uncomfortable with this, then simply do not use that part of the question. However it can be helpful to teach children to differentiate between harmful secrets and innocent secrets as they will inevitably come across innocent secrets at various times. In the unlikely but possible event that this conversation leads to a disclosure, follow the procedures outlined in the most recent edition of Good Practice (URC Wales and England), <https://urc.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-good-practice/>, the Church of Scotland guidelines (URC Scotland) or the safeguarding guidelines adopted by your setting (Local Ecumenical Partnerships) and seek advice from your church designated safeguarding coordinator.

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

In this game players must work together as a team to help the guesser determine the correct answer.

One participant is selected as the guesser, who stands at the opposite side of the room facing the other players. The rest of the group are shown the answer (eg famous person, object, phrase, song, film, tv programme) and work together to enable the guesser to correctly determine the answer.

Instruct the group to provide clues using one of the methods below. The guesser can continue to shout out answers until they guess correctly.

- Describe – shout out words to describe the clue. (You are not permitted to use any the words contained within the clue, and cannot use “sounds like” or rhyming clues)
- Acting – act out the clue using actions. No speaking or sounds allowed.
- Drawing – draw symbols and images to represent the clue. No written words or speaking allowed.
- Freeze Frame – Work as a group to produce a frozen image representing the clue. Use group members bodies and props to produce the image. No speaking or sounds allowed.

Repeat the game by switching the guesser and selecting a different method for providing clues.

Online game

Spell it out! (Online or outside)

Online - Group members take it in turns to think of a word and spell it, one letter at a time, using their hands or arms. The rest of the group try to guess the word being spelt. Younger group members may need a leader to help them with spelling. When the word has been guessed correctly, a new group member chooses a word to spell.

Outside – In a larger space, group members take it in turns to use their whole body to make the shape of letters which spell a word. As before, the rest of the group tries to guess the word.

Experience

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

Luke 2 <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3A8-20&version=ICB>

Psalms 78 <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+78%3A+70-72&version=ICB>



Where can I find the story online?

Under fives: Shepherds and Jesus cartoon by Beginners Bible

<https://youtu.be/yVXR6k7DvtI>

Over fives: Jesus and the shepherds by Saddleback Kids <https://youtu.be/L5m2GE6DFeM>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: All the angels sing by Doug Horley <https://youtu.be/m1FLUZ3ansI>

Five to elevens: Jesus is the good, good news by Unite TV <https://youtu.be/VFFjz0nF2s>

Explore

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

Sharing Good News

See [Faith Adventures: Youth Resource \(sample\)](#) for an approach to this section which takes the theme a bit deeper.

This activity section explores what the best ways are to share good news. It is also an opportunity for older groups to consider who we get our news from and who we can trust. Begin by asking where they hear news from? It could be the radio, TV, social media, word of mouth, newspapers and so on. Encourage the group to think about what works for them and others and what does not work. Is it different according to what the news is, who is receiving the news etc?

The shepherds heard the news from the angels on the hillside, they went to see Jesus for themselves and immediately went out telling others the good news. Now it's our turn.

Task: Agree as a group what you think the good news message is that you want to share with your community this Christmas. What does God want your community to know? It could be a simple 'God is with you' Christmas reminder or something more focussed on God's response to the immediate needs of your community.

Once you have agreed the good news message, you now need to agree the best ways to share that news.

Think about who you are communicating it to and what the possible methods might be. This could be visiting your local senior home and performing songs or a drama to share the message, it could be being in the shopping centre on a busy Saturday Christmas shopping time to share the message, it could be handcrafted cards to deliver to all the homes in your road or a big banner outside your church.

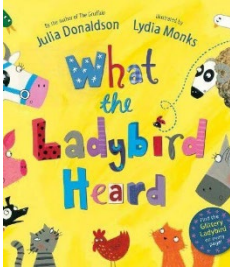
Whatever you decide, get creative and use the session time to plan and create your method, ready to go and share.

You could use the wondering questions as you get creative.



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.



'What the Ladybird Heard' by Julia Donaldson and Lydia Monks
<https://youtu.be/Lckjqm91LCK>

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

- I wonder why God chose shepherds to share the news?
- I wonder what it was like to be a shepherd in Jesus' time?
- I wonder who's told you about Jesus?

See [Faith Adventures: Youth Resource \(sample\)](#) for conversations starters which take the theme a bit deeper.

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- What's the most exciting news you've had to share or keep secret for a while?
- I wonder who the first person would be that you would tell if you had exciting news?
- I wonder, if your friends asked you about Jesus, what could you say?

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:

- An angel – The angel shared the news with the shepherds. Who do we hear good news from?
- Newspaper, toy phone etc – How do we share good news? Play 'sharing news' with exaggerated tone of voice, facial expressions etc
- A toy sheep/sheep ornament – talk to the children about the care a shepherd takes to look after the sheep, and that Jesus was a good shepherd, he loves and cares for us all.
- A toy dressed as a shepherd – talk to the children about shepherds in Bethlehem, being ordinary people who were given extraordinary news to share. Think about them being frightened, then amazed, then excited.
- The week 2 book from the advent set (an Ordinary Shepherd) if you have one available – tell the story and look at the pictures. Alternatively, use a board book that tells about the shepherds
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- 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 (e.g. stones, felt, twigs etc)



Express

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

See Faith Adventures: Youth Resource (Sample) for ways to encourage young people to talk and listen to God.

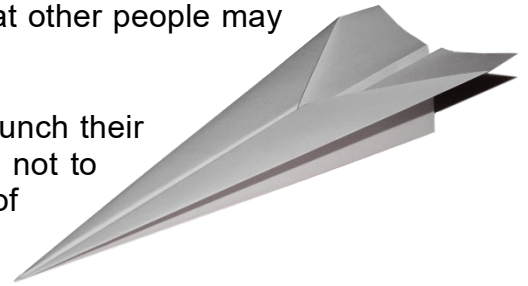
Paper Plane Prayers

You will need – A4 paper, pens

Give everybody a piece of paper and ask them to fold it to make a paper airplane. (You can find printable instruction sheets online via this link - <https://intheplayroom.co.uk/how-to-fold-paper-planes/>)

Invite them to think about the things that they would like to bring to God in prayer and write or draw them on the paper plane. (Remind everyone that other people may see this prayer.) Allow some time for quiet reflection.

Once the planes have been made, invite everyone to launch their paper planes towards the front of the room. (Take care not to throw the planes directly at other people.) As you let go of the paper plane, offer the prayer to God, and ask that God will take your prayers and listen to them.



Spoken prayer

Listening God

We don't have to shout when we pray because we know that you hear even the tiniest whisper.

But loving you, and being loved by you, is such good news that we WANT to shout it – so that others may hear.

The shepherds left the stable and spread the word about what they had seen and heard.

Give us the courage to spread the good news of your love to our friends.

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.

See [Faith Adventures: Youth Resource \(Sample\)](#) for a more research-based response activity

Splatter paint

This craft shows how far and wide things can reach, such as a message when being shared or some paint when being thrown or directed.

What you will need:

Straws
Paint
plates
Brushes
Paper
Large wallpaper
Aprons
Floor coverings



What you do:

Ensure the tables, floor and people are protected with coverings, aprons.

Either cover a large upstanding board with wallpaper (plain side) or ensure everyone has a large piece of paper, preferably A3. Get a generous amount of paint onto a brush and flick it onto the paper (alternatively pour a small amount directly onto the paper) Direct the straw at the paint and blow through it, forcing the paint to spread in different directions. (Be careful not to suck through the straw instead)

Domino Rally

Domino rallies are a great, visual example of cause and effect - of good news being passed on. You could break into smaller groups or work as one big group to create a domino rally. Each group will need their own set of dominoes. You could:

- Set the groups a time challenge
- Ask for the longest rally
- Ask for the most complicated rally

You could also watch a short video of a more complex domino rally, like this: . **Amazing Rainbow Dominoes by Taikamuna**

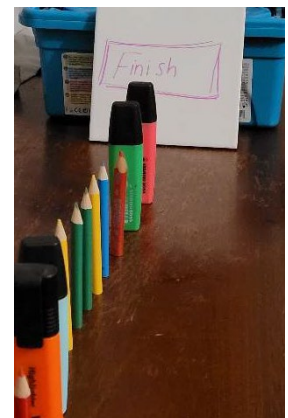
https://youtu.be/B4_VQ0tnzoU

Why not try?

If you don't have dominoes, why not try setting up a rally with re-used cereal or cracker boxes? With books or pencils?

Is it easier to keep a rally moving with small or large objects?

Is it better if the objects are closer together or further apart?





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:

- Find an opportunity to tell or point out to someone something amazing that God has done.
 - Remembering how easily messages and news passes from one person to the next, try to make sure everything you say this week is positive and helpful – maybe giving someone a compliment or telling a friend or family member how special they are to you.
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We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **the Shepherds** 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 **Ordinary Stargazers**.



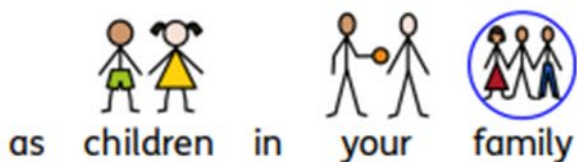
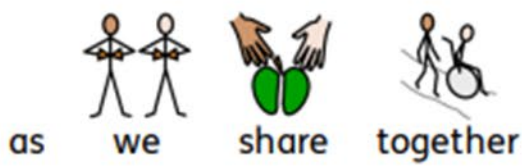




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