



# 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>

## 2 Corinthians 9: 15 and Luke 2: 1-7 – An extraordinary birth

Theme: Ordinary birth, extraordinary gift

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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. In these passages Luke describes the birth of Jesus. Luke is one of two of the four gospel authors to share an account of the birth, Matthew being the other author. His account is a concise summary of what happened and does not feature the shepherds or the wise men.

Be mindful that although we are talking about Jesus being the gift, discussion may lead to gifts in general, this may be a difficult conversation for children who are not looking forward to Christmas and may feel left out when others describe more extravagant gifts than they anticipate receiving.

As this session falls during Christmas week some of the ideas and suggestions here could be used for intergenerational services/ activities and groups.



# 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**

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## In-person game

### Running Around Game

The story written for this game gives a very good summary of the Bible reading for today and the Christmas story.

Invite your group to sit in a circle. Assign each person a name/word from the story (more than one person can be assigned a name). As you read out the story, any time 'their' word is used they must get up and run clockwise around the circle until they return to their place.

Characters/words:

**Caesar Augustus**

**Bethlehem**

**Mary**

**Joseph**

**Jesus** (when this name is read out – EVERYONE must run around the circle)



Read this story:

A decree was issued by **Caesar Augustus** that there should be a census taken of everyone in Israel.

**Joseph**, who lived in Galilee would have to go back to the town where his ancestors lived – **Bethlehem** – and, because he was engaged to **Mary**, she would have to travel with him.

**Caesar Augustus** didn't mind that people would have to make long journeys.

**Mary** was pregnant with a baby at this time so the journey would be difficult for her and **Joseph**.

They set off and arrived in Bethlehem a few days later.

**Mary** was very tired after their long journey. So was **Joseph**.

**Joseph** couldn't find anywhere for him and **Mary** to stay because Bethlehem was full of people who had returned to take part in **Caesar Augustus'** census.

Eventually, a kind inn keeper said that **Joseph** could stay in a stable with **Mary** and it was in this stable that **Mary** gave birth to their baby.

They called the baby **Jesus**.

### Online game

#### Describe the image.

The Corinthians reading says 'Praise God for this *incredible, unbelievable*, indescribable gift'

The aim of this game is for participants to see how difficult it is to describe a picture and for another to recreate it.

Recreate an image as accurately as possible, using verbal instructions provided by another player. Select one player to take on the role of describer and provide them with a copy of an image which only they can see. They describe the image to the other players, who use pen and paper to try and recreate the image from these instructions. The describer is the only player allowed to speak, other players are not permitted to ask questions while they are drawing. Take a look at the completed images and see which is closest to the original image.

## Experience

For this story we recommend using the 'The Voice' version for the Corinthians reading and easy-to-read version for the Luke reading.

Corinthians

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+9%3A+15+&version=VOICE>

Luke <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3A+1-7+&version=ERV>

#### Where can I find the story online?

Under 5s The Christmas story by – Nicola Grieves <https://youtu.be/fiEx9rBK5VA>

Over 5s The Christmas story by Sharon Lloyd <https://youtu.be/SgUpd4SSVMg>



'He's Here' The story of the birth of Jesus from the Jesus storybook Bible

[https://youtu.be/E2y2FJqsv\\_8](https://youtu.be/E2y2FJqsv_8)

The Bible Society It Begins in Bethlehem – A Nativity Rhyme for Christmastime

Downloadable in English and Welsh

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/resources/it-begins-in-bethlehem-a-nativity-rhyme-for-christmastime/>

### Songs to support the story

Under 5s Away in a Manger with actions <https://youtu.be/jKDPcu21N-k>

Born In A Barn - Preschool Worship Song <https://youtu.be/X8HkqF1vqKU>

Over 5s All the Angles sing that Christ has come – Doug Horely

<https://youtu.be/m1FLUZ3ansl>

## Explore

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

### Exploring the story with Christmas Pass the Parcel

Using different types of wrapping paper for each layer with an object in each layer to explore the story

Introduce the parcel and say that this is a special Christmas gift given for everyone. Play a game of pass the parcel. When the music stops, get the person holding the parcel to unwrap the layer, holding up both the paper and what's inside, and use the paper and the item to tell the story. As each layer is revealed, encourage everyone to wonder why each different paper has been chosen.

#### First layer - Christmas paper and party blower

More than 2,000 years ago, GOD began something new. He sent Gabriel, one of his angels, to visit Mary. Amazing! She was a teenager living in Nazareth. Gabriel has a message for her, from GOD...

*Blow the party blower*

'You will have a baby. You will call him Jesus. He will be the son of GOD.'

#### Second layer - brown paper and footprints or a donkey

Mary was engaged to be married to Joseph. When the baby was nearly due to be born, they had to travel to Bethlehem, where they had been born, to be counted in a census.

#### Third layer – 'new born baby' paper and a piece of soft cloth and some straw



When they arrived in Bethlehem, they could not stay in the inn because there was no room for them. The innkeeper said they could stay in the stable with the animals.

The baby was born and Mary carefully laid him in a manger.

#### **Fourth Layer - brown paper and a toy sheep**

Ordinary Shepherds out in the fields heard the good news of Jesus' birth from the angel and went to find the baby.

#### **Fifth layer - star paper and a star**

A star led some star gazers from far away to the place where Jesus was born. They gave the baby gifts of frankincense, gold and myrrh and they worshipped him.

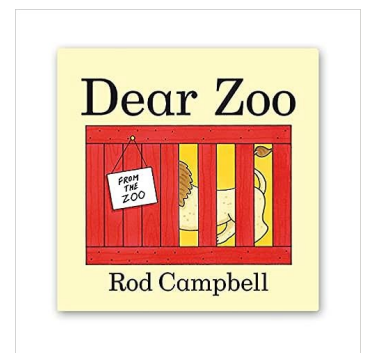
**Sixth Layer - newspaper and a box of celebrations to share.** (Ensure there are alternatives for those who cannot eat chocolate)

The gift of Jesus' birth is good news for everyone and a time to celebrate. Share the chocolates!

#### **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.

'Dear Zoo' by Rod Campbell <https://youtu.be/ZqGYWRHOV6E>



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

- Baby Jesus is sometimes described as a gift, I wonder why? Why is the gift described as indescribable? Do you agree?
- What do you wrap up carefully? Why would it need to be wrapped carefully?
- Where have you travelled from today? Who has travelled the furthest?

#### **Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities**

- I wonder if you'd like your birthday to be on Christmas Day? Would you consider it to be a good thing?
- I wonder what's the most incredible, unbelievable, indescribable gift you've ever been given? Or given to someone else?

#### **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:



- Paper and pens – Everyone had to go to their home towns to be counted. Write the child(ren's) name(s) on the paper and put a tick by it to say "I'm here". Count the children
- Cloth/Blanket – Baby Jesus was wrapped cloths when he was born. Notice how the material feels when you touch it or rub it on your skin.
- Straw (available from pet stores) – The straw reminds us that Jesus was born in a stable. Pass the straw around and feel it, talk about what sort of bed it would make.
- Toy animals – To represent the animals in the stable. Encourage the children to make noises together for the different animals.
- Wrapped present/gift bag – To remind us of God's gift to us. Say "Thank you God" together
- Nativity Set – Figures to lay out as you tell the story.

## Express

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

### Gift tag Prayers

What you need:

Gift tags (could cut out old christmas cards)

Pens

String/ ribbon

Small christmas tree (optional)

What to do:

Spend a minute or two thinking about who are like special gifts in our lives. It's ok to think of more than one person. Write or draw something that represents each person on a gift tag. It could be one word or a prayer of a couple of sentences.

Thread the string through the tag and hang on the christmas tree, or on the Christmas tree in the church. Children might also choose to take their tags home to hang on their own Christmas tree.

Say together: Dear God, Thank you for the gift of those people we have thought of today. Help us to be a gift to others. Amen.

### Spoken prayer

*Children could use the makaton sign for "thank you" and say the words every time the words are used in the prayer and could jump and cheer and wave their hands in the air instead of saying amen at the end of the prayer.*





Dear God

The time for waiting is over. Christmas is here!

Thank you (*thank you*) for parties and presents, cards and carols,

Thank you (*thank you*) for fun and food, family and friendship.

But most of all thank you (*thank you*) for the most extraordinary gift:

Jesus, your son, born just like an ordinary baby is born,

bringing your extraordinary love into our ordinary lives.

So, like Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the stargazers,

We want to welcome you and celebrate.

**HOORAY!**

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## 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.

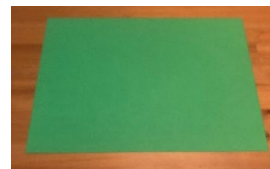
### Gift Bags

#### You will need:

A4 paper, sticky tape, scissors.

#### What you do:

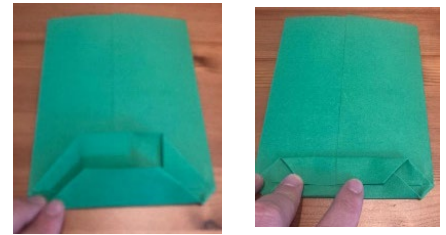
- Place A4 sheet of paper in landscape position. Fold the left and right hand edges together so that they overlap and stick together using tape.
- Fold up the bottom edges of the paper, making a crease around 2cm from the bottom.
- Open up the bottom fold, by pulling the bottom edges of the paper apart in opposite directions. Flatten the corners into triangle shapes.







- Step 4 – Fold each side of the bottom into the middle so that the edges overlap and then tape the edges together.



- Step 5 – Your bag is now complete. Place your gift items inside and close the bag by folding down the top edges, using tape or a sticker to seal closed.



### Matchbox Jesus

The Bible reading describes how Mary laid baby Jesus in the animal feed box, she took great care. Stress how carefully and delicately everyone should approach decorating the box and placing Jesus inside. The bow helps solidify the idea of Jesus being a gift.



#### You will need:

- Matchbox or small junk modelling box
- Things to decorate the box
- Something to represent Jesus
- A piece of wool big enough to tie round the box
- Some felt

#### What to do:

Decorate the small box. If using playdough, pipe cleaner or similar, create a baby Jesus. Carefully place it in the small box covering it with the felt. You might like to shut the box and tie the wool around it to signify Jesus is a gift.

### Christmas Cookies to give as a gift – Dark Chocolate & Ginger Cookies.

Today we have heard how baby Jesus is considered a gift by some. Participants could bake these cookies and take them away to give to others as a gift. (If time allows, you could run this activity together with the gift bags craft, placing the cookies inside the bags.)





You will need:

- 150g unsalted butter
- 80g light brown sugar
- 80g granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 225g plain flour
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 200g chopped dark chocolate (or chocolate chips)
- 1 tsp ground ginger (optional)



Preheat oven to 190C/fan 170/gas 5, line 2 baking trays with greaseproof paper.

Add butter and sugars to a bowl and beat until creamy.

Beat in egg and vanilla extract

Sift flour, bicarbonate of soda and baking powder into the mixture. (Add the ground ginger at this point if using.) Mix with a wooden spoon to combine the ingredients and form a dough.

Add the chopped chocolate and stir into the dough.

Roll the dough into balls, place 6 balls on each baking tray. Allow space between each ball as the dough will spread during cooking.

Bake for 10-12 minutes each. Remove from oven and allow to cool on the baking trays.

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### 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:

- The important thing about walking the way, following Jesus in our everyday lives at this time of year, is to remember that Christmas is a celebration of Jesus's birth. It's a special gift from God. So take time out to say thank you. And make sure Jesus is included in his own birthday party!
  - Have an extraordinarily lovely Christmas!!
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We hope you enjoyed exploring **The story of Christmas** with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing [lorraine webb@urc.org.uk](mailto:lorraine webb@urc.org.uk)

Why not have a look at next week's resource on **Luke 2: 21-22, 25-34a**

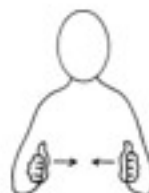
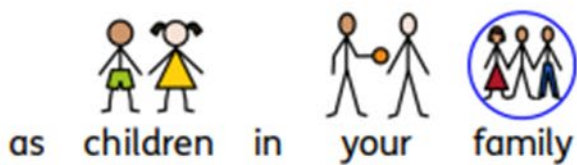
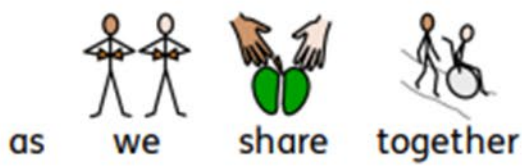
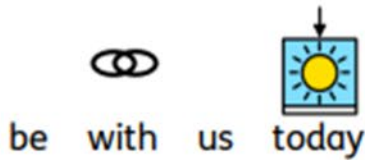




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