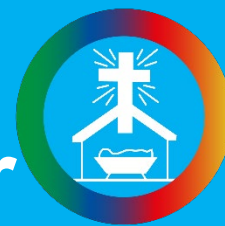




# Faith Adventures for Children Together



*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>

## Luke 2: 25-33– Simeon recognises Jesus

Theme: Don't lose the extraordinary in all the ordinary

### Contents:

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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 passage tells of the visit of Mary and Joseph to the temple when Jesus was six weeks old. It was Jewish law to "purify" the mother after childbirth as they were ritually "unclean" after giving birth. It may be wise not to be distracted from the main theme with children, however do not avoid answering their questions if they ask and you may wish to have an answer ready.

It was also Jewish law that the first born male should be taken to the temple at forty days old to be dedicated to God. Sacrifices were to be made – Mary and Joseph gave the sacrifice of two doves which was stipulated as the sacrifice of the poor. Remember that every family that had a child forty days previously in the whole of Israel will have been in the temple to present their child and complete the purification of the mother. It was as ordinary for Jewish families at that time as going to register the birth of a child is in the UK today.

We have focused here on the story of Simeon – the story of Anna will be used at another time, though you may wish to mention it. Both Simeon and Anna had been waiting for a long time for the promised Messiah – in contrast, we don't have to wait as Jesus is here with us always, we just have to recognize him.



You may wish to think about what help you believe Simeon was waiting for for Israel in case this question is asked by the children.

In the UK the weeks after Christmas can feel a bit of an anticlimax and the decorations are brought taken down and put away already. But the extraordinary gift of Jesus is not just about Christmas, so how do we keep that sense of extraordinary when things are going back to being ordinary? You may want to mention that in many European countries the Christmas tree doesn't go up until Christmas Eve and decorations stay up for forty days until Candlemas, the date when we mark the events from this issue's story, which is usually around the end of January/beginning of February.

## 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

This game can be used to introduce the idea that even though we are coming to the end of Christmas celebrations in our churches and families, we don't need to be in a hurry to pack Jesus away until next year. He is with us as we travel through the year together.

- Split your group into two or more teams.
- Each group has a cardboard box and the same number of Christmas decorations to pack away.
- The groups must pack away the decorations in their box, whilst being timed.
- The group who works together to pack away all the decorations the fastest, wins.
- Each group has a Wild Card (you could use a Christmas card with a picture of Jesus or any picture of a baby) which they must try to sneak into one of the other team's boxes. Any team with a Wild Card in their box at the end, gets a two minute penalty.....per Wild Card!

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## Online game

### Here is the news...

It can sometimes be difficult to know what is true and what is not. Simeon knew that the baby that Joseph and Mary brought to the Temple that day was special, he was headline news. Sometimes things can sound so extraordinary that we can't believe they are true.

Can you tell if the following headlines are true or false?

1. Schools in Inverclyde (Scotland) welcomed 17 sets of twins in reception classes at the start of the 2023 school year (True)
2. Gorillas in San Diego Zoo have been taught to knit so that they don't get bored (False)
3. A university banned capital letters to avoid scaring students (False)
4. An 8 year old girl pulled a medieval sword from a lake (True)
5. NASA is installing internet on the moon (True)
6. A Teenager was fined £100 for feeding a chip to a pigeon (True)
7. In Canada, they use skittles instead of salt to clear ice from the roads (False)
8. A zoo in China has had to deny that the bears in the zoo are just humans dressed up in bear costumes (True)

You could ask your group if THEY could come up with some news headlines that might sound true, but aren't, and see if the rest of the group can guess them. Mix them in with some true news headlines.

## Experience

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

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3A25-35&version=ICB>



## Where can I find the story online?

Cross Roads Kids' Club – God's Story: Anna and Simeon <https://youtu.be/leN-xNrkjbo>

Luke 2 – The Christ Child is presented at the temple

Church of the Latter Day Saints [https://youtu.be/Mrhyc-Fbu\\_Y](https://youtu.be/Mrhyc-Fbu_Y)

(While we do not espouse some of the teachings of the Mormon church, their video material for children on the Bible is generally excellent and we will never use it without having checked to ensure that the content is true to the reformed tradition)

Bible Story Time – Rolling Hills Presbyterian Church <https://youtu.be/ZlrJuBVbG-E>

## Songs to support the story

Under fives: Promises – Cross Roads Kids <https://youtu.be/yY3EogFlkCY>

Five to elevens: Everlasting God – Chris Tomlin [https://youtu.be/\\_zsTYwzf1nc](https://youtu.be/_zsTYwzf1nc)

# Explore

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

## “Not an advent calendar”

Ask who enjoyed an advent calendar in the countdown to Christmas. How did it help to get you excited and ready for the big day?

Reflect on how you seem to wait for ages then it's all over. What were some of the highlights for the group this Christmas? How does it feel now that Christmas is behind us, does any know how many days we have to wait till the next Christmas (might be worth working this out)

Well, the good news is that we have celebrated Jesus being born and now Jesus goes with us into the new year and journeys on with us every day. Before we know it we will be celebrating Easter. It's not over; our journey with Jesus continues.

We are going to make a calendar, just like an advent calendar to use over the coming days/weeks/months to remind us that we have things to look forward to but also to remind us that God is with us as we move on.

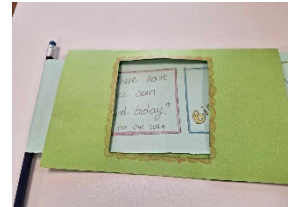
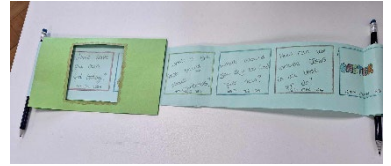
Your group need to agree how long the calendar will be for, whichever works best for them. – it could be from now till they return to school or until Candlemas, or perhaps from now till Easter; it could have windows that you open daily or weekly or perhaps a calendar that takes you to next Christmas that you open monthly. It would be good for everyone to make one to take home and use as well as perhaps making a large group one to use each week together. You could make a simple calendar with windows to open or perhaps



one on a roll with each window scrolling through a main square. Whatever works best for your group; there are many versions and templates online.

Once you have decided on how many windows you need, we can get creative.

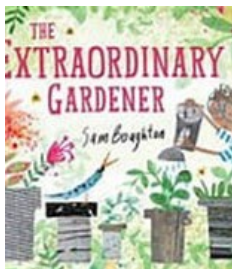
They can add things into the windows that are things to look forward to, such as birthdays or celebrations. You could add in regular questions to enable them to keep reflecting on God being with them. One way of doing this is for each window to include the question 'where have you seen God today?'. the main idea is to remind us to not put Jesus away and forget him till Easter or next Christmas. Let's keep the excitement and shine of Christmas as we move on. You could maybe build in an element of surprise to each calendar by swapping calendars during the making time and encouraging the group to write encouraging messages in windows to be found later, or perhaps draw little pictures to make each other smile.



As the group create and decorate their calendars you could discuss their hopes and plans for your group in the coming months. What did they appreciate or enjoy last year and what would they like to do as a group this year.

## 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.



'The Extraordinary Gardener' by Sam Broughton

read by Miss W Loves Literacy <https://youtu.be/1MLhaSCjFLE>

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

- How do you feel when Christmas is over? How can we keep the special feeling?
- Has there ever been something you've experienced that you didn't realise at the time how important it was, but can see it looking back.
- Simeon was described as very religious – what clues are there in the story that he was a religious person? What do you think that meant in this story and what does it mean now?



## Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder if you've ever had to wait a long time for something special?
- I wonder what's been special for you this Christmas?
- I wonder how Simeon recognised Jesus amongst all the other babies in the temple?

## 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:

- A baby doll or picture of a baby – Mary and Joseph were pleased to have a baby. They took him to the temple to say thank you to God.
- Some baby clothes – look how small these are – you fit in clothes like these once. As we grow we change and find out who we are
- Name tag – if possible one from round a newborn's ankle but you may just need to make a tag with a name on – ideally the names of the children in the group if you have them. This is your name, the name your family gave you.
- A bowl of water (if appropriate for your setting) – some babies are marked with a cross shape with water to dedicate them to God
- Walking stick and glasses – Simeon was an old man. He had been waiting a long long time to see the baby Jesus.
- Some tinsel or decorations – Christmas is over, but it's still exciting because Jesus is born.
- 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?

### Glitter prayers

Gather some sequins or large pieces of glitter (small glitter may be fun, but less so for whoever does the cleaning!) If you have none to hand, find some sparkly wrapping paper or foil and cut some shapes (about the size of a pound coin)

Hold them in your hand and reflect on your Christmas period. Thank God for the special times it held and for the chance to wonder again at the birth of our Saviour and friend, God's son Jesus.

On your amen, toss the sequins into the air.

Now, gather them up again one by one. As you collect each one, simply say, "help me to keep hold of you Lord."

This is a simple prayer to remind ourselves to not 'put God away with the decorations', but to continue to walk with God into the new year. You will possibly be finding pieces of sequins that you missed, for a few weeks; giving you the opportunity to pray again.





## Spoken prayer

Amazing God,

You do so many extraordinary things using ordinary people.

We have travelled with Joseph and Mary on their journey to Bethlehem

We have waited with the shepherds as the angel told them to go to a stable to see a King

We have travelled with the stargazers as they followed a light in the sky leading them to the saviour of the world

We have waited in the Temple with Simeon until he met Jesus.

WE are ordinary people, too, and we don't have to travel, or wait, because we know that Jesus is with us now.

Thank you, God, for your son, our saviour.

Amen

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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.

## Not an Advent Calendar

The craft suggestion for this week is described in the section entitled "Explore". You will need an assortment of craft materials depending on how you want to make your not-an-advent-calendar – paper of different thickness, thin card, colouring materials, writing materials and possible also things like eco-glitter and stick-on sequins for decoration.

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## A surprise 'pop up' thank you card

You will need:

- Two sheets of A4 card in different colours.
- Stickers (optional)
- Coloured pens
- Scissors and glue



### What you do:

Fold the two sheets of card in half and make a firm crease.

Cut around the edge of one of the cards to make it slightly smaller - this will be the inside of the card. On the inside card, make a cut in the card about 4cm deep, 6cm from each edge. This makes the section for the pop up surprise element of the card.

Open the card that you just cut, so you can see the slits. Use your fingers to gently push the tab section up towards you. Run your fingers along the fold of the card so that it's firmly creased. Crease the tab section in the opposite direction so it pops out and away from the card.



Glue the inside card to the outer card, making sure the pop up section does not get glued down. Decorate the pop up with your surprise message. Decorate the front of the card with pictures or stickers. Remember not to give any clue about the message inside so that the card is a surprise when it is opened.

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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:

- Did you make your own nativity set this Christmas? When you put it away or take it down, why not keep the baby Jesus out on a shelf where you can see it every day and remind yourself that God is with you, not just at Christmas but always.
- Find someone who is much older than you who has a faith and talk to them about what their faith means to them. How did they first get to know Jesus?

We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of **Simeon** with us.

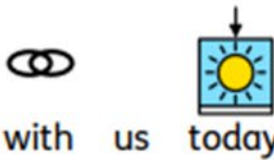
Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing [lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk](mailto:lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk)

Why not have a look at next month's resources on the theme of **Surprises?**

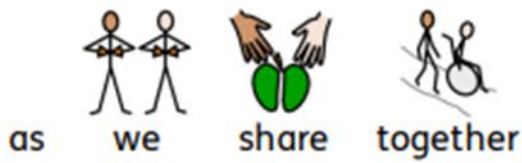




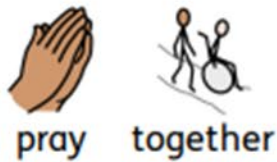
Jesus our friend,



be with us today



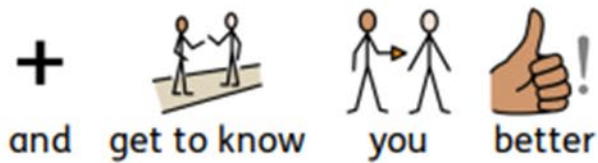
as we share together



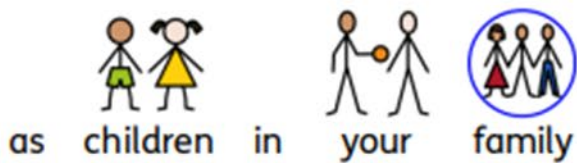
pray together



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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